

**SUPREME COURT SURPRISES || THE STOP-TRUMP MOVEMENT**

DAVID COLE

SASHA ABRAMSKY

DOUBLE ISSUE

# THE Nation



## BREXIT SHAKES THE WORLD

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## Letters

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### London Calling

Thank you for D.D. Guttenplan's short and inspiring article ["Yes He Kahn," June 6/13]. The election of Sadiq Khan as mayor of London is a true source of hope for other Global North countries—a great step forward and a wake-up call for the United States.

SUSAN ALLMAN  
CEDAR CITY, UTAH

### Sign of the Times?

"Monopolized" by Mike Konczal [June 6/13] made me think of the comment Victor Serge made while reporting from Germany in 1923: "The monopolist is one of the last products of an exploiting society in disintegration."

ANDREW MAYO  
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

### Connecting the Dots

I was surprised several months ago to see Frank Luntz interviewing folks about current affairs on CBS. He's a longtime strategist for the Christian right, so I found it hard to believe that CBS would employ him as an unbiased reporter.

My surprise turned to disgust when I read David Bromwich's "A Surviving Remnant" [June 6/13], which describes Luntz's advice to fossil-fuel interests: Don't "raise economic arguments first" but rather "continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue."

Surely CBS has money for adequate research on its putative experts. That is what makes the network's use of Luntz's talents so surprising. This observation is just one more reason why *The Nation* is so important for honest and thorough journalism.

NANCY MCFADDEN  
NASHVILLE, TENN.

### Left to Her Own Devices?

I would love to make sure that Hillary Clinton reads Bruce Shapiro's

article "How to Stop Trump" [June 6/13]. It hits the nail on the head: She can't swerve right and win this election. Hopefully, voter turnout will surprise us all in the general election.

KRISTIN STAHL-JOHNSON

We must all wait and see whether Clinton turns to the right or to the left, and how Sanders's supporters receive her words and deeds. We hard-core Bernie supporters ain't ready to throw in the towel—though if and when we must, it may not land in the Clinton corner. A turn to the right by Hillary will cost her lots of those votes. Then again, will a turn to the left be believable?

EDWARD M. PROTAS

I'm as true a believer in Bernie's agenda as any, and I've been railing against the Clintons' Democrat-in-name-only brand of politics since the 1992 primaries. But it pains me to think that any Bernie supporter plans to cast a vote for Trump if Hillary secures the nomination. I've been holding my nose and pulling the lever since after the 1972 election (the last enthusiastic vote I cast for the Democratic nominee), and I will do so again. Why? Three words: the Supreme Court. We desperately need to restore sanity to the Court, and Trump will not do so. Hillary is way too interventionist and chummy with Wall Street (and Wal-Mart) for my taste, but at least she'll appoint better justices than any Republican or third-party joker. So get real, guys and gals: Fight on for the political revolution, but accept small victories rather than big defeats, if those are the only choices.

DAVID STEINMAN

### After Nature, Democracy

To me, Katrina Forrester's "Earthly Anecdotes" [June 6/13]

Comments drawn from our website

[letters@thenation.com](mailto:letters@thenation.com)

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## Post-Brexit Blues

**I**n a normal country, the stunning rebuke the British public delivered to the country's political establishment last week by voting to leave the European Union would be an occasion for humility, soul searching, and, above all, a recognition that it wasn't only the pollsters who kept predicting a "Remain" victory that

were fatally out of touch. For a few hours on Friday morning, as the implications of what had just happened sunk in—the likely unraveling not just of Britain's ties to the rest of Europe, but of the United Kingdom itself, with Scottish independence back on the agenda, Northern Ireland's Good Friday agreement seriously undermined, and the whole European Union now at risk of dissolving under a rising tide of nationalism—Britain was that country. London, a cosmopolitan capital that voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, was a city in shock. Prime Minister David Cameron, who'd bet his own political future on a "Remain" vote, had resigned. The pound was in free fall, and as the scale of the self-inflicted damage to the economy became clear—the FTSE 100 Index lost £120 billion, its biggest drop since the 2008 financial crisis—the national mood was one of desperation rather than celebration.

By Monday, mourning and melancholia had given way to mania. In Britain, the rush to sign an online petition calling for a second referendum was so intense that it crashed Parliament.uk. The Belfast post office ran out of application forms for Irish passports. In Wales—which, despite getting more EU funds than any other part of the UK except Cornwall, voted to leave by a 2.5 percent margin—the Labour government scrambled to protect the region's already precarious economy. And Cornwall itself, which also voted to leave, issued a plaintive plea to "protect" its EU subsidy. Meanwhile, UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage admitted that his campaign's claim that leaving the EU would free up £350 million a week to spend on the National Health Service was a "mistake," and Daniel Hannan, a leader in the Tory Brexit camp, said that voters who expected the winners to deliver on their pledge to restrict EU immigration were "going to be disappointed."

Cameron's announcement that he would leave it to his successor—who likely won't even be elected until the Conservative Party Conference in October—to trigger Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, starting the two-year clock on setting the terms of Britain's withdrawal from the EU, only added to the sense of chaos, with Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, saying "it doesn't make any sense to wait." Though that sense of urgency was echoed by both the French and German foreign ministers, it was notably not shared by Boris Johnson, the New York-born figurehead of the "Leave" campaign (and current favorite to replace Cameron), who declared: "I cannot stress too much that Britain is part of Europe, and always will be," adding that changes to the country's relations with the continent "will not come in any great rush."

This widespread confusion left the Labour Party with an open goal—if it hadn't chosen just that moment to tear itself apart, with more than 40 members of party leader Jeremy Corbyn's shadow cabinet either resigning or getting fired, and deputy leader Tom Watson insisting that Corbyn had lost the confidence of his colleagues in Parliament. Corbyn determined to fight on, and thousands of his supporters packed Parliament Square on Monday—though most of the signs they carried had been printed by the Socialist Workers Party. The next day, Corbyn lost a vote of confidence by Labour MPs by an overwhelming margin, but actually forcing him out would require another leadership election, which could take weeks to organize, and which he might well win. Meanwhile, with both major parties essentially leaderless, Britain is in danger of becoming a zombie state, staggering through the summer with no effective government or opposition, the world's fifth-largest economy—



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Cover illustration by Steve Brodner of (top to bottom) Nicola Sturgeon, David Cameron, Queen Elizabeth II, Alan Johnson, Michael Gove, Peter Mandelson, Arron Banks, Theresa May, Nigel Farage, George Galloway, Boris Johnson, Jeremy Corbyn, and Hillary Benn.



## BREXIT BY THE NUMBERS



53.4%

Voters in England who chose "Leave"

52.5%

Voters in Wales who chose "Leave"

62%

Voters in Scotland who chose "Remain"

55.8%

Voters in Northern Ireland who chose "Remain"

*"You're not laughing now, are you?"*

Nigel Farage, far-right leader of the UK Independence Party, addressing the European Parliament after the Brexit vote. A warmer welcome was given to the representatives of Scotland, which voted to stay. There is likely to be a second referendum on Scottish independence, given the country's widespread support for remaining in the EU.

since Friday, the sixth-largest—at the mercy of panic and rumor, facing a stampede by both global capital and European labor for the nearest exit.

How did we get here? The immediate cause of the crisis was Cameron's promise in 2013 to hold a referendum on British membership in the EU, a move designed to neutralize the electoral threat of Farage and the UKIP, which had only managed to elect a single member to Parliament. Cameron also hoped to finally settle a question that had divided his party for decades. With nearly every leading economist backing Chancellor George Osborne's warning that a decision to leave would trigger a do-it-yourself recession—and with Labour and the Liberal Democrats both committed to remaining in Europe—Cameron doubtless assumed the voters would choose prudence over protest.

Instead, the debate unleashed the furies of racism and xenophobia—and exposed the yawning chasm between the elites, both in the government and the media, and the people for whom both Tony Blair's "Cool Britannia" and Cameron's "compassionate conservatism" were never more than cruel jokes. As social media exploded over the weekend with denunciations of the "Leave" campaign's many lies and distortions, and plaintive cries for some kind of do-over from "Remain" voters in London, the most penetrating and persuasive analysis of the vote came from John Harris, a *Guardian* reporter who has spent the past six years traveling the country looking at politics from "anywhere but Westminster." Others had underlined the age distribution—with younger voters overwhelmingly in favor of "Remain," while those 45 and over tilted toward "Leave"—or the geographic gaps: Though Scotland, Northern Ireland, London, Liverpool, and Manchester all voted strongly for "Remain," from Orwell's Wigan to Wordsworth's Cumbria to Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon, the English people decided they do not want to be European anymore. But Harris noticed it was actually about class, with the losers in globalization's race to the bottom using the only weapon they had to strike at a system that offered them nothing.

"What defines these furies," writes Harris, "is often clear enough: a terrible shortage of homes, an impossibly precarious job market, a too-often overlooked sense that men (and men are particularly relevant here) who would once have been certain in their identity as miners, or steelworkers, now feel demeaned and ignored. The attempts of mainstream politics to still the anger have probably only made it worse: oily tributes to 'hardworking families', or the...trope of 'social mobility', with its suggestion that the only thing Westminster can offer working-class people is a specious chance of not being working class anymore." Replace the word "Westminster" with "Washington" and then try to tell me that's an unfair description of what our own politicians—Democrats and Republicans alike—have been offering America's workers.

Though it's far too soon to say what will happen next—especially since, as we now know, neither side took the possibility of a Brexit victory seriously enough to make plans—we can be reasonably certain about what won't happen. Despite the fervent wishes of my North London

neighbors, there won't be a second referendum. It's true that when the Danes rejected the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, they were made to vote again. Likewise the Irish, who voted down the Lisbon Treaty until they changed their minds. But those were mere treaties. This was a vote on Britain's future. Though the referendum itself isn't legally binding, Parliament can't simply ignore the results—not without the real risk of blood in the streets.

There is one path back from the abyss—narrow but not impossible. If Cameron's successor calls a snap election—more likely than not, given what happened to former prime minister Gordon Brown's political fortunes when he failed to seek an electoral mandate—and the Labour Party unites behind a leader and a platform committed both to staying in Europe and to ending austerity, that would give voters not just another chance but a real choice. Since in British law Parliament alone is sovereign, only a parliamentary election fought between parties who took clear and opposing positions on membership in the EU would have both the legal and democratic legitimacy to overrule the referendum. For that to happen, though, the young Labour supporters who brought Corbyn to power, and who have just been robbed of their European future, may have to decide that they care less about loyalty to a particular leader and more about the business of gaining and wielding power—first inside the Labour Party, and then across the country. Whoever leads Labour would also have to overcome the party's traditional refusal to work with the Scottish Nationalists, whose leader, Nicola Sturgeon, was the most credible politician on the "Remain" side.

Meanwhile, Americans who have been assuring themselves it can't happen here need to take a hard look across the Atlantic. Though divided by politics, for months the elites of this country—Conservatives, Labour, and in the media—shared a complacent conviction that the British people were far too sensible, or cautious, or fearful, to be lured by the sirens of nationalism. Every day the press exposed another lie by the Brexit campaign, pointing out that most EU immigrants had jobs and paid taxes, and that Britain, which had access to the world's largest free market without having to convert to the euro or dispense with border controls, actually had the best deal in Europe.

But no one ever told the people whose jobs had been destroyed by globalization how they were going to find prosperity again. And no one ever convinced the people who had already lost control of their schools and hospitals—even their pensions—that the "Leave" campaign's brilliant slogan "Take Back Control" was just another hollow promise. Instead they were lectured to, and bullied, and threatened with "higher food prices" by the bosses of the same chain stores that hollowed out their towns. All in the name of a distant union that, to them, promised only more of the same.

Who voted for Brexit? People already convinced the future belonged to someone else. People with nothing left to lose. If you don't think we have people like that in America, you haven't been paying attention.

D.D. GUTTENPLAN

*Britain is in danger of becoming a zombie state.*



# Brexit's Benefits

*The vote could help tame the new Cold War.*

**T**he stunning British vote to leave the European Union has roiled diplomats and central bankers across Europe and the United States. The political establishments on both sides of the Atlantic are finally beginning to get the message. For too long, their policies have failed to provide either shared prosperity or security. For too long, they have ignored the many who are struggling while catering to the few who are thriving. The British vote should force fundamental reassessments in the EU and the United States—of austerity; of rule by technocrats; of immigration policy; of economic and foreign policy.

With its allies in NATO, Washington should place a particular focus on reassessing the dangerous descent toward a new Cold War with Russia, which has received shamefully little attention. William Perry, defense secretary under President Bill Clinton and a scientist with a lifelong expertise in nuclear deterrence, warns that “today, the danger of some sort of a nuclear catastrophe is greater than it was during the Cold War and most people are blissfully unaware of this danger.”

US-Russian relations have undergone a frightening deterioration in recent years. The dominant Western media and establishment narrative has treated Russia as the sole aggressor, while failing to account for the EU and NATO roles in the Ukraine crisis and other disputes.

In the past few years, the United States and its NATO allies have imposed sanctions on Russia; deployed antiballistic-missile systems in Poland and Romania; dramatically augmented land, air, and sea forces; and expanded military exercises on Russia's borders. (The Anakonda 2016 “exercise” conducted this month in Poland involved more than 30,000 soldiers, most from NATO countries.)

Not surprisingly, Russia has responded by augmenting its forces along its Western borders, including more nuclear-capable missiles—thereby increasing the risk of accident, miscalculation, and escalation. Meanwhile, France and Germany have either failed or refused to convince the Ukrainian government to live up to its agreements under the tenuous Minsk accords, which were designed to bring about a negotiated end to the civil war. If Ukraine is to have any chance of recovery, assistance from Russia and the West will be needed.

Washington has largely spurned cooperation

with Russia against the Islamic State in Syria, even while continuing to arm insurgents attempting to overthrow Bashar al-Assad, Russia's Syrian ally. Calls by Hillary Clinton and others for escalation in Syria or enforcement of a “no-fly zone” against the Assad regime could lead to direct confrontation with Russia. Meanwhile, the increasing tempo of exercises on the Russian border is seen as prelude to a larger permanent presence. Hostile forces have not amassed this close to Russia's Western borders since World War II. The NATO meetings in Warsaw in July are slated to ratify this increasingly dangerous posture.

The roots of this escalating tension and military buildup lie in the US decision to expand NATO to Russia's borders after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Instead of building a zone of peace that would acknowledge Russia's security concerns, Washington pushed to incorporate former Soviet satellites into NATO, including newly independent states like Georgia and Ukraine. George Kennan, one of the fabled post-



NATO's Anakonda 2016 exercises.

World War II “wise men” and author of the famous 1947 article that formed the basis of the Cold War “containment” strategy, warned prophetically in 1996 that NATO's expansion into former Soviet territory would be a “strategic blunder of potentially epic proportions.”

The Brexit vote—which, if nothing else, will force the EU and Great Britain to focus more on their internal challenges—may help trigger a fundamental reassessment of this perilous course. France and Italy are already chafing at the costs of the sanctions against Russia. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has labeled the recent NATO exercises as “sabre rattling and war-mongering.” The United States and NATO have compelling reasons to cooperate with Russia, including defeating the Islamic State, helping to negotiate an end to the Syrian civil war, restarting the progress on loose nukes, halting nuclear proliferation, and advocating nuclear disarmament.

A serious reassessment could revive the discussions of building a zone of peace on Russia's borders. After all, as British scholar Richard Sakwa observed: “The EU has failed in the biggest challenge of our era, to create an inclusive peace order from Lisbon to Vladivostok.... A divided continent, with a new ‘Berlin’ wall now being built from Narva in the Baltic to Mariupol in the Sea of Azov, can hardly be considered a success.” That reassessment might begin with EU pressure to sustain the Minsk accords, as well as exploration of a broader settlement for a nonaligned Ukraine—one inside the EU, but precluded from membership in NATO. It could build on the Iranian agreement to expand cooperative efforts with Russia to bring

## NEW MEDIA

# Real Life

**I**n a 2012 *New Inquiry* essay titled “The IRL Fetish,”

Nathan Jurgenson argued that what happens online is just as real as what happens offline—that those who lamented the rise of technology for invading “real life” interactions were misguided.

One essay, however, wasn't enough, so Jurgenson, along with editors Rob Horning, Sarah Nicole Prickett, Alexandra Molotkow, and Soraya King, and with funding from Snapchat, launched a magazine. “Popular discourse on technology has sustained the idea that there is a digital space apart from the social world rather than intrinsic to it,” Jurgenson says, “while popular tech writing is often limited to explaining gadgets and services as if they're alien, as well as reporting on the companies that provide them.”

*Real Life* will approach tech writing through a range of reported, theoretical, and personal essays about “living with technology.” Its editors and authors mostly boast some association with *The New Inquiry*, the online magazine of criticism founded in 2009. Experience *Real Life* at [reallifemag.com](http://reallifemag.com).

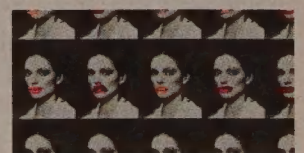
—Samuel Metz

## REAL LIFE

### In the Eye of the Coder

*Security scoring apps work best when the results are absurd*

JACQUE VILLATIERIS-BRAPHIS June 27, 2016







SCOTUS

## Desperate Times

**O**n June 27, the Supreme Court struck down, in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, parts of a draconian Texas law, HB2, that would have decimated the state's reproductive-health-care infrastructure. The law, which required that doctors have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals and that clinics meet the standards of ambulatory surgical centers, resulted in the immediate closure of many facilities and would have left Texas with some 10 clinics clustered in only four major metropolitan areas. The Court's 5-3 decision, the most decisive statement on reproductive rights since 1992's *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, ruled that states could not place a "substantial obstacle in the path of women seeking a pre-viability abortion," which would "constitute an undue burden...and thus violate the Constitution."

Since the passage of HB2 in 2013, pro-choice advocates worried that it would result in women attempting to induce an abortion themselves. The Texas Policy Evaluation Project quantified those fears with a study that found that an estimated 100,000 women in Texas between the ages of 18 and 49—and possibly as many as 240,000—have attempted to terminate a pregnancy on their own, without medical assistance.

The most commonly reported method was using the drug misoprostol. Others included sustaining blows to the abdomen and taking illicit substances.

This historic ruling reaffirms that American women have the constitutional right to control their own bodies without being forced to endure the horrors of a back-alley abortion.

—Natalie Pattillo

the Syrian civil war to a negotiated settlement, helping to relieve the pressure on Europe from the millions tragically displaced in that calamity. That reassessment should be grounded in the recognition that other powerful nations have zones of security as well, and that neither NATO nor the United States has the charter or the resources to police the world.

Commentary about the Brexit vote has focused largely on its potentially destructive economic consequences for Britain and the EU, and on the ignorance and alleged second thoughts of "Leave" voters. Foreign-policy commentary has sounded the dangers that Brexit might weaken NATO or strengthen Russia's role in a divided Europe. Wouldn't it be ironic if the people's vote forced the EU to lighten its destructive austerity, gave impetus to a diplomatic settlement in Syria, and led NATO to reconsider its increasingly reckless posture toward Russia? If that happened, the voters in Britain, wittingly or not, will have done the world a great service.

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

## Free-Trade Fallout

*What the Democrats must learn from Brexit.*

**P**lenty of Americans have been unsettled by Britain's vote to leave the European Union. And much of what unsettles them has to do with Donald Trump's claim that the Brexit vote sets the stage for a similar reaction against elite political and economic arrangements in the United States.

Trump's a blowhard, and an opportunist. But the angst and agitation over the Brexit vote, and Trump's statements regarding it, is appropriate. Britain's 52-48 vote for Brexit confirms that millions of voters in Western democracies are so frustrated with politics as usual that they're ready to embrace extreme options. Some of them are responding

to crude racist and xenophobic appeals. But the voting patterns in Britain, like the polls from battleground states in the US, suggest there are other factors at play. One of these is a deep frustration on the part of working-class voters with economic globalization schemes. Trump is speaking to them when he criticizes trade deals and outsourcing—even if his language is that of a frequently cynical and absurdly inconsistent "billionaire populist."

Any answer to Trump should include pushback against the lies he tells, which are strikingly similar to the lies that the more nefarious of the "Leave" campaigners told before the Brexit vote on June 23. Just as Trump echoes the immigrant-bashing and anti-refugee rhetoric that was heard in Britain during the referendum campaign, so he peddles

promises that a combative approach to international relations will yield instantaneous prosperity and social progress. Hillary Clinton's campaign is using Trump's bizarre response to the vote—which included speculation about how the collapsing value of the British pound might help business at his golf resort in Scotland—in ads that stir further doubts about the faux populism of a man who has never been on the same side of any issue for long.

But the response has to go beyond that. The "Leave" campaigners succeeded because there are millions of working-class voters—many of them in the left-leaning "Labour heartlands" of northern England—who are quite certain that globalization has not worked for them. Well, there are millions of Americans in battleground states like Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina who are quite certain that globalization hasn't worked for them either.

Clinton got it right when she told the US Conference of Mayors, "Just as we have seen there are many frustrated people in Britain, we know there are frustrated people here at home too."

While a substantial number of British voters blamed the EU for the misery of wage stagnation and deindustrialization, a substantial number of American voters blame the misery of wage stagnation and deindustrialization on international arrangements like the North American Free Trade Agreement, the permanent normalization of trade relations with China, and the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership deal. Advocacy groups like Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch and the Citizen Trade Campaign agree that corporate-friendly trade agreements like these have harmed workers, farmers, small-business owners, communities, and the environment in the United States and the countries with which it trades. This is one of the reasons why Bernie Sanders, an ardent TPP critic, did so well in the Democratic primaries, and why Clinton—who once praised the TPP—now says she's opposed to it.

The anti-TPP stance of the two Democratic contenders led to speculation that the Democrats' platform, as drafted by a 15-member committee consisting of Clinton backers, Sanders backers, and others, might formally line up the party in opposition to the agreement.

When the platform-drafting committee took up the issue in St. Louis in late June, Representative Keith Ellison, the Minnesota Democrat who serves as cochair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, proposed language rejecting the trade deal. Ellison's amendment was defeated, however, after Clinton-allied members on the drafting committee said they didn't want to go on record against a deal that has been backed by President Obama.

Ellison, who was one of Obama's first supporters when he ran for the presidency in 2008, says: "I am disappointed that my amendment to take

*Millions of voters know globalization hasn't worked for them.*

COMMENT



a strong stand against the Trans-Pacific Partnership—a position shared by both Secretary Clinton and Senator Sanders—was not included.” The congressman argues that it is vital to take a strong stand against the TPP, and he is encouraging the full platform committee to adopt his anti-TPP amendment when it meets in July.

Ellison’s argument takes on greater urgency as the news from Britain sinks in.

The Brexit result is the latest signal that voters have not just soured on the rough mix of globalization, deindustrialization, and austerity that can be traced back to Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States; they are now casting votes based on that opposition. Wealth has been redistributed upward, wage rates have deteriorated, inequality has accelerated—and voters are saying “stop.” They are not doing so only in Britain. In the United States, opposition to failed trade policies in general, and the TPP in particular, played a critical role in helping Sanders secure big victories in Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and other states where he was able to focus the debate on economic fundamentals. Clinton has recognized this and spoken with increased specificity about her opposition to the TPP—going so far as to declare her disapproval of proposals to organize a postelection vote on the measure by a lame-duck Congress. “I oppose the TPP agreement—and that means before and after the election,” she declared in May.

“It is hard for me to understand why Secretary Clinton’s delegates won’t stand behind Secretary Clinton’s positions in the party’s platform,” says Sanders, who has said that he will vote for Clinton in November but argues that the platform must be strengthened in order to better her position against the presumptive Republican nominee.

“That is the process we are engaged in right now,” Sanders told CNN on June 26. “We’re working on the Democratic platform. We are talking to the Clinton campaign. And I hope very much that Secretary Clinton understands that not only is it good public policy, it’s the right thing to do; it is good politics to begin to move in that direction.”

In light of the Brexit vote, the character and quality of the Democratic response to Trump and Trumpism becomes all the more crucial.

Trump’s stances on trade policy and the challenges that arise in an era of globalization are rooted in an empty-headed and often ugly nationalism. Democrats must offer a clear, coherent alternative that recognizes the failures of the past (NAFTA), that commits to avoiding new ones (TPP), and that offers a vision for the future that repudiates both crude nationalism and crude corporatism. Democrats can engage and inspire voters by an honest rejection of race-to-the-bottom free-trade agreements, and an embrace of a new fair-trade ethic that strives to improve the prospects of workers and communities, of the environment and human

rights, and of democracy itself, in the United States and around the world.

JOHN NICHOLS

## Court of Surprises

*Justice Scalia’s death changed everything.*

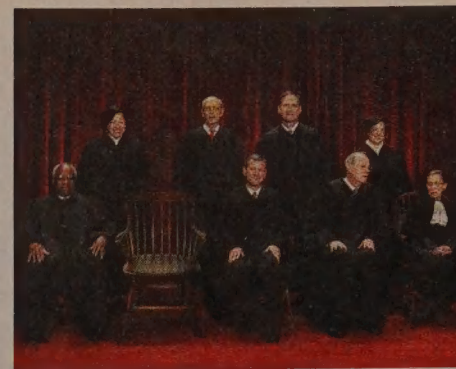
**I**n October, this Supreme Court term looked like it could be a disaster. The Court had taken review of cases involving multiple hot-button issues that typically divide conservatives and liberals, and, as has been the case since 1972, the Court’s conservatives outnumbered its liberals. Abortion, affirmative action, public-union dues, President Obama’s immigration initiative, voting rights, and the Affordable Care Act (again) were all on the chopping block. Many observers predicted this would be the year the Roberts Court showed its full conservative strength, and the only question that remained was how devastating the results would be.

Then Justice Antonin Scalia died, and everything changed. There was no longer a conservative majority; instead, the Court was evenly divided, 4–4, between conservative and liberal justices. Lawyers preparing for their Court appearances changed their arguments; pundits adjusted their predictions. That a single justice’s absence could make such a difference revealed how small the margin of conservative advantage had been. Would the term now end in deadlock? A tie is a highly unsatisfactory way to resolve a Supreme Court case: It leaves the lower court’s decision standing, but it makes no law and offers no reasoning.

The Court did deadlock in some cases. A 4–4 tie left standing a trial-court injunction blocking President Obama’s immigration initiative, denying relief to several million undocumented immigrants without even offering a reason. An earlier 4–4 tie, by contrast, saved public-union dues from a likely defeat. But for the most part, the Court avoided ties. For example, in a case asking whether Catholic nonprofits could invoke religious objections in refusing to provide insurance coverage under the ACA for their employees’ birth control, the Court sidestepped a deadlock by sending the case back to the lower courts to see if the matter could be settled.

In the term’s two most closely watched cases, however, the Court not only did not tie, but surprised virtually all of the experts. Both times, it was Justice Anthony Kennedy who delivered the surprise. In *Fisher v. University of Texas*, he sided with his liberal colleagues Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, and Sonia Sotomayor to uphold an affirmative-action plan (Justice Elena Kagan was recused, so only seven justices heard the appeal). It’s only the second time in the Court’s history that it has upheld a university affirmative-action plan,

(continued on page 9)



SCOTUS

## One Justice Short of a Full Court

**S**enate Republicans have refused to accept President Obama’s nomination of Judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court, holding out hope for the election of a Republican president in November. However, even without a ninth justice, the Court announced groundbreaking decisions on June 27 that delivered victories for women in two significant cases.

**Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt**

**Vote: 5–3**

The Supreme Court struck down two regulations contained in the Texas abortion law known as HB2. The law restricted women’s access to abortions by forcing clinics to meet the strict requirements applied to surgical centers, and by requiring those performing abortions to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital. When HB2 was enacted, it forced half of the clinics in Texas to close, leaving only 20 of the original 40.

**Voisine v. United States**

**Vote: 6–2**

The Supreme Court ruled that domestic violence can be a misdemeanor crime, thereby prohibiting those who have committed domestic violence from possessing a firearm. Justice Elena Kagan delivered the majority opinion of the Court. In the wake of the Orlando massacre—whose perpetrator, Omar Mateen, had a history of domestic violence—this is yet another victory for both women and gun-control advocates.

—Joyce Chu



## CLICKBAIT

## You Are What You Read

**T**he changes depicted in Pew Research Center's "State of the News Media 2016" report are not only bad for journalists, but for the functioning of democracy in America, as Eric Alterman notes at right. A thinly stretched media pushed by advertisers to focus on clicks has had a particularly odious impact on this election season by aiding the rise of Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP presidential candidate. Consider the changing ways in which Americans consume news:

**-7%**

Drop in daily newspaper circulation in 2015

**-2%**

Drop in magazine subscriptions in 2015

**21%**

Americans who have listened to a podcast in the past month

**44%**

Americans who get their information about the election from social-networking sites, compared to just 17% in 2012

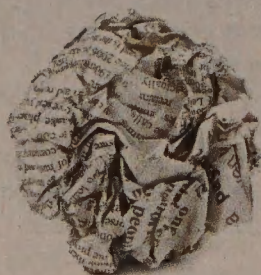
**65%**

Americans who get their information about the election from digital sources, compared to 36% in 2012

**25%**

Amount of newspaper ad revenue that came from digital sources in 2015

—Samuel Metz



## Paper Rout

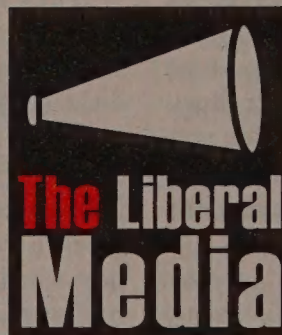
*A new report reveals the deepening crisis for US newspapers.*

**E**vidence of the slow death of the American newspaper has lost its news value in recent years, rather like evidence of the warming of the earth's atmosphere. As with global warming, we know what we're losing but remain paralyzed, unable to take significant steps to stop it. The topic comes up on certain occasions: when a media company sees its stock tumble, lays off a significant percentage of its employees, tries (and often fails) to sell itself, merges with another conglomerate to increase "efficiency," pretends to be some other kind of company with a hipper brand, hires a CEO famed for his or her "turnaround" capabilities, or hands pages over to a right-wing billionaire to use as a daily propaganda pamphlet. Otherwise, the news is like the weather: It's getting worse and worse, and yet life goes on as if none of this is really happening to us.

But it is. Since the Pew Research Center took over the extremely useful "State of the News Media" reports, the annual examination of industry trends has come to function like a doctor who reminds her patient that no matter how well he may feel, the cancer inside is spreading. The numbers this year, however, show a disease in the process of metastasizing. According to Pew, the circulation for daily newspapers, including digital readers, fell 7 percent last year, and advertising earnings among publicly traded companies fell almost 8 percent. It was the industry's worst year since 2008, but this time there was no recession to blame.

As a result of these trends, reporting staffs are shrinking and sometimes disappearing. Editorial staffing has decreased nearly 40 percent over the last 20 years, and the most recent figures show a 10 percent drop in 2014 alone. In other words, the end is near—much closer than almost anyone anticipated when media analysts like me began announcing the death of the American newspaper about a decade ago. We've known the reasons for the decline for a long time. The migration of news to the Internet destroyed the industry's business model, in which readers were attracted by the "pudding" (sports, gossip, gardening tips, and comics), and advertising paid for the unprofitable reporting on "spinach" (war, disease, corruption), with no ability on the part of the advertisers to determine which of their ads led to which sales.

# Eric Alterman



Those halcyon days ended with the advent of targeted ads on websites that could be directly traced to sales via the click-through—to say nothing of the migration of classified ads to Craigslist, which cost the industry \$5 billion just between 2000 and 2007. While newspapers were trying to manage the "transition" to a Web-based delivery system, in which advertisers now pay a fraction of their previous fees to reach readers, social media provided another punch to the gut: The ad money that used to support the news business has now migrated there. Just five companies today account for 65 percent of all digital advertising. And the rich are getting richer and richer: Between them, Facebook and Google swallowed up more than 76 percent of all digital-ad growth last year, as newspaper digital advertising continued to fall both in real terms and relative to the competition.

Why should we care? Because our democracy depends on the (relatively) reliable reporting that newspapers, far more than any other medium, have traditionally provided. This remains the case despite the defenestration of the industry and the loss of so much of its editorial muscle. Yes, a few magazines (like this one), a handful of websites, and the occasional in-depth report on a show like *60 Minutes* contribute to the mix, as do nonprofit NGOs and public-minded institutions like Pew. But most news sources these days are either cannibalizing newspaper reporting, commenting on it, or making stuff up. And as these sources come to dominate public discussion, verifiable truth becomes harder to find, while lies and other forms of misinformation become easier to exploit.

According to a Pew survey taken this past January, "just 5% of U.S. adults who had learned about the presidential election in the past week named print newspapers as their 'most helpful' source—trailing nearly every other category by

*As with global warming, we know what we're losing but remain paralyzed, unable to take significant steps to stop it.*



wide margins." Could a comically transparent huckster like Donald Trump succeed in a political ecosystem with a strong media component dedicated to examining his outrageous claims? It's all but impossible to imagine. What the late journalism scholar James W. Carey termed the "vital habits" of democracy disappear under such circumstances, and we are left at the mercy of "the quack, the charlatan, the jingo, and the terrorist," who, as Walter Lippmann predicted nearly a century ago, would "flourish only where the audience is deprived of independent access to information."

In past columns on this topic, I've looked to foundations and universities to help restore a base of honest, tough-minded reporting that could serve both the watchdog and public-discussion functions that newspapers have historically provided. Some have made important contributions: The MacArthur Founda-

tion deserves special kudos for its recent injection of \$25 million in unrestricted grants to public and independent media. And the Web has yielded a number of somewhat specialized publications that do real reporting and seek to stimulate sensible debate. But the trends at work have proven so swift and strong that the prospect of finding a system-wide solution is now beyond any realistic hope. The message of this year's "State of the News Media" report is that we need to prepare for a post-truth political world, one in which Donald Trump should be considered a frightening avatar of a future—no matter how badly Hillary Clinton beats him in November. As with the battle to save the planet, the hour is late and time is short. Given the resources we possess and the severity of the threat, history will not easily forgive—or even understand—our complacency in the face of this foundational democratic crisis. ■

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*As newspaper reporting declines, verifiable truth becomes harder to find, while lies and misinformation become easier to exploit.*

(continued from page 7)

and it's also the first time that Kennedy has voted in favor of any race-based government action.

Kennedy and his fellow conservatives had previously adhered to a formalistic theory of equal protection that requires "color-blindness" and treats as equally suspect the consideration of race to benefit or to harm members of minority groups. But in *Fisher*, Kennedy ruled that race could be considered to increase the admission of disadvantaged minorities. While the other conservative justices objected that Texas's goal of diversity was too open-ended, Kennedy recognized that diversity's many educational benefits cannot be reduced to precise numbers. He concluded that using affirmative action to increase diversity could survive strict judicial scrutiny if the university found that race-neutral alternatives were insufficient, and if each applicant's file was reviewed holistically, with race playing only a modest role.

Texas had achieved some racial diversity through a race-neutral plan that offered automatic admission to any Texas student in the top 10 percent of his or her high-school class, but Kennedy agreed with the university that class rank alone doesn't allow a school to capture all of the benefits of true diversity.

As a result, affirmative action survives. The Court approved an affirmative-action plan only once before, in 2003, although it also warned in that decision that the practice should end in 25 years; significantly, *Fisher* contained no such warnings. As the racial protests on college campuses across the nation in the past year attest, the modest leg-up that African Americans and Hispanics receive in admissions to many schools isn't

nearly enough to repair the wounds that centuries of discrimination have inflicted, or to offset the prejudices that still impair the judgment of us all. But the country would be even more unjust without it.

On the term's last day, the Court delivered another surprise: *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, a 5–3 decision striking down restrictions on the provision of abortion in Texas. At issue were rules requiring clinic doctors to have "admitting privileges" at hospitals nearby, and compelling the clinics to meet the costly standards applicable to "ambulatory surgical centers," even though most abortions don't require surgery and only a minuscule percentage ever lead to hospitalization (and most of those arise after the woman has returned home, rendering irrelevant the heightened requirements imposed on clinics). The rules had forced half of the clinics in Texas to close, making it extremely difficult for women in many parts of the state to get an abortion.

Once again, Justice Kennedy cast the decisive vote. Had he sided with his conservative colleagues, the Court would have split 4–4, leaving standing the decision below that had upheld Texas's restrictions. Only once before had Kennedy voted to strike down an abortion restriction—in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), when he also parted company with his fellow conservatives and voted to reaffirm *Roe v. Wade*, notwithstanding his own earlier criticisms of *Roe*. Since then, however, the Court had rarely applied the "undue burden" standard announced in *Casey*, and in its two principal cases, both involving prohibitions on so-called partial-birth abortions, Kennedy had voted to uphold the restrictions, even though they protected neither maternal

health nor the potential life of the fetus.

In *Whole Woman's Health*, the Court concluded that Texas's rules imposed an "undue burden" on the right to choose, because they did virtually nothing to advance women's health and created substantial obstacles to abortion. As the Court noted, abortions are 14 times safer than childbirth and 10 times safer than colonoscopies, yet the heightened requirements imposed on abortion didn't apply to these more dangerous procedures. Ever since the *Casey* decision acknowledged that states could regulate abortion in the name of women's health throughout the pregnancy, abortion opponents have been using the mantle of maternal health to enact laws whose real purpose is to reduce access to abortion. In *Whole Woman's Health*, for the first time, the Court called the states on this tactic. The decision is likely to invalidate similar restrictions in many other states.

Thus, a term that began by courting disaster ended by reaffirming two of the most important yet controversial practices in the United States: affirmative action and abortion. The fact that a single justice's demise, and another justice's willingness to break ranks with his conservative colleagues, had such dramatic consequences for the constitutional law that governs us all underscores how critical it is that the next justice not be named by Donald Trump. If readers of this magazine still harbor any doubts about the importance of vigorously supporting Hillary Clinton, this Supreme Court term should end them.

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*David Cole, The Nation's legal-affairs correspondent, is the author, most recently, of Engines of Liberty: The Power of Citizen Activists to Make Constitutional Law.*





## BREXIT

## Down and Out

**O**f the top 10 localities hardest hit by austerity in the UK, eight voted to leave the European Union. Downward mobility has left many British people insecure: 33 percent fell below the poverty line at some point between 2010 and '13, amid serious cuts to the welfare benefits supplied by the British government. Tragically, voting to leave the European Union in an attempt to improve their circumstances may cost poor families up to £5,542 per year in EU-administered benefits.

### Blackpool

**£914:** Annual loss in welfare benefits per working-age adult per year between 2013 and '15  
**67.5%:** Voted to leave

### Westminster

**£821:** Annual loss  
**31%:** Voted to leave

### Knowsley

**£797:** Annual loss  
**51.6%:** Voted to leave

### Merthyr Tydfil

**£722:** Annual loss  
**56.4%:** Voted to leave

### Middlesbrough

**£717:** Annual loss  
**65.5%:** Voted to leave

### Hartlepool

**£712:** Annual loss  
**69.6%:** Voted to leave

### Torbay

**£704:** Annual loss  
**63.2%:** Voted to leave

### Liverpool:

**£702:** Annual loss  
**41.8%:** Voted to leave

### Blaenau Gwent:

**£698:** Annual loss  
**62%:** Voted to leave

### Neath Port Talbot:

**£696:** Annual loss  
**56.8%:** Voted to leave

—Alex Lubben

## Gary Younge



## The Great Brexit Lie

*Our borders still won't protect us from global capital, or the xenophobia within.*

**O**n the morning of June 24, Donald Trump arrived in Scotland just as all of Britain woke up to discover that it would be exiting the European Union. Trump's appearance at this moment of nativist triumph laid bare one of the paradoxes of right-wing populism: Even as its advocates demand bigger walls, more guards, and tougher laws to stop immigration, the ideology itself respects no borders.

The chaos that has ensued since the Brexit results came through has also exposed the central evasion underpinning the populist right-wing agenda: While the right can successfully rally a faction of the poor on the basis of race, nation, religion, or all three, it cannot deliver for them, even on its own sordid terms.

Having mobilized public support for their pledges to restrict immigration, reallocate EU money to the National Health Service, and quit the single market, "Leave" campaign leaders are now conceding that those promises are either not possible, no longer desirable, or were only ever hypothetical.

"Leave" proponents appealed to the postcolonial nostalgia of that segment of the electorate who wanted to restore Britain to a version of its former glory. Before the referendum, Britain was the fifth-largest economy in the world; the following afternoon, with the pound having lost 10 percent of its value and billions wiped off the stock exchange, it was the sixth-largest, after France.

Not only has the economy shrunk; the actual country looks set to shrink too. Scotland, where 62 percent voted to remain, is threatening to hold another referendum on independence. Irish Republicans are calling for a vote on Irish unity so that Northern Ireland, where 56 percent voted to remain, can stay in the EU.

Great Britain did not get greater. It got poorer, more isolated, and may yet get considerably smaller.

Of course, the comparisons with Trump can be overdone. The most prominent leader of the "Leave" campaign, the Conservative Party's Boris Johnson, was until recently the elected mayor of multicultural London, which voted (by 60 percent) to remain. And there were good reasons—ones that had nothing to do with xeno-

phobia or racism—why people might have voted to leave the EU, namely the democratic deficits in the European Union project and the remote and opaque nature of the EU's bureaucracy.

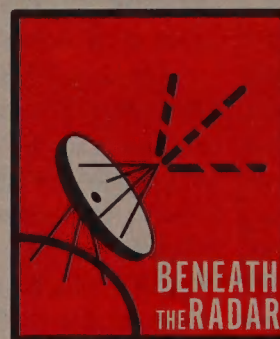
The question of sovereignty in the neoliberal age is central to a host of issues raised by EU membership. How does a nation—the largest democratic unit that the West can claim—exercise its will in a world where capital can roam free and traders can undermine the will of the people simply by shifting resources to countries where labor is cheaper and unions are weaker?

The trouble is that Britain's EU membership cannot by itself resolve this dilemma. While we can opt out of the EU, we cannot opt out of global capital. So as the markets tanked, the pound took a nosedive, and our credit rating got downgraded, we were treated to a crash course in what getting your country back really means in a system guided by profit, not patriotism.

The EU, at least, came with a patina of social-democratic measures: labor protections, a Court of Justice, some environmental regulations, and the free movement of people.

But the parallels with the forces that produced Trump cannot be denied either. The core issue that propelled many "Leave" voters was immigration. It's not difficult to see why. When the British government decided to open its borders to Eastern Europe in 2004, it estimated an influx of about 100,000 immigrants. The actual figure was over 1 million. Four years later, there was an economic crash, followed by a Tory government and a period of austerity. People looked for someone to blame. With no major party willing to point to the bankers as the root cause of the crisis, people turned to the most visible proxies for the globalization that had so damaged their lives: immigrants.

"Leave" did well in Labour heartlands where people felt they had been left behind. When



*We were treated to a crash course in what getting your country back means in a system guided by profit.*



warned that things would get worse if Britain left the EU, this part of the population wondered how much worse it could get. So while the EU was on the ballot, what the verdict ultimately ruled against was a system that many felt had failed them. The fact that all of the major parties, leading economists, and financial institutions backed “Remain” merely underscored that point. The stewards of a system that is demonstrably crushing people said to do one thing, so the people being crushed did another.

But the “Leave” campaign also traded in dangerous xenophobic and racist slurs, with the most offensive messaging spewing from the UK Independence Party, which is basically Trump in a blazer holding a pint of beer. In many ways, this made the campaign itself far more foul than the result it produced. It has not only left Britain deeply divided (I feel like I’m back in the United States

covering the 2004 presidential campaign), but has given free rein and prominence to a strain of bigotry and intolerance that most had thought marginal.

It has already coarsened our public discourse and now risks sending an already fragile and volatile political culture into a tailspin, along with the economy. At midnight on the day of the vote, Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, who led the “Remain” campaign, thought he’d won; by 8 AM, he had resigned. Labour members of Parliament, meanwhile, are attempting to use the referendum loss as an excuse to oust left-wing leader Jeremy Corbyn, who was elected in a landslide less than a year ago.

The EU is still waiting for someone to formally request separation. We are both at a standstill and in free fall. Having successfully gotten our country back, nobody knows quite what to do with it. ■

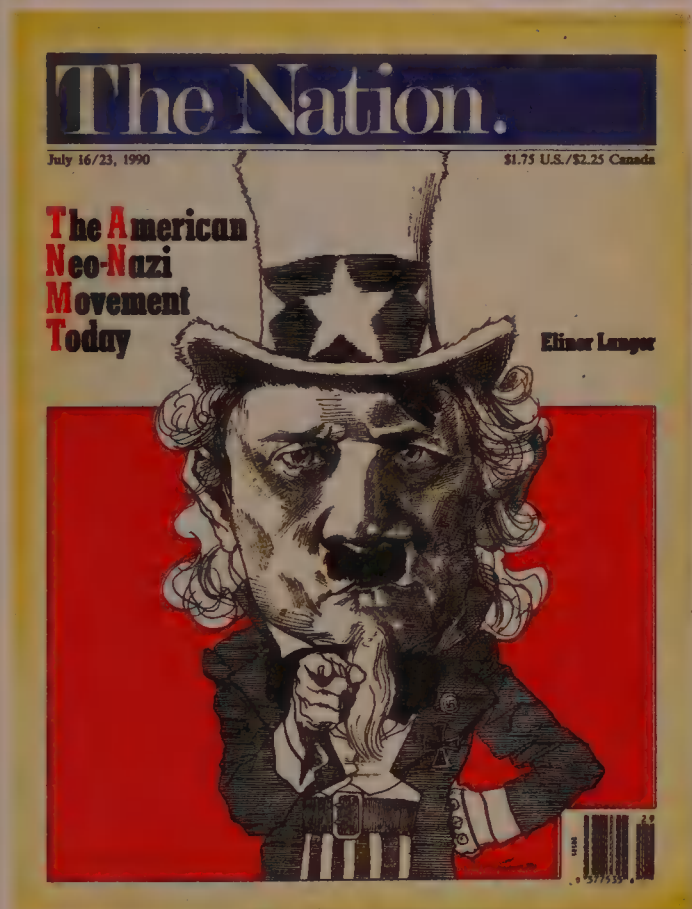


#Brexit happens when politicians torture everyone w austerity and then point the finger at migrants.

@sarahrlnrd,  
Nation senior editor  
Sarah Leonard

BACK ISSUES/1990

## Donald Trump, Neo-Nazis, and the Racist Continuum



**I**n July of 1990, *The Nation* devoted an entire issue to “The American Neo-Nazi Movement Today,” a report by the journalist Elinor Langer. It was the story, she wrote, “of something secret becoming public; of something forbidden becoming permitted; of the long, slow re-emergence of

racial thinking in the United States from its retreat after World War II to the point where it can once again energize action; of the gradual, tentative crystallization of a political movement openly aimed at white hegemony.” After rereading the piece 26 years later, Langer told me she was “appalled by its relevance.”

The important question for Langer, as she argues in a recent forum at TheNation.com, is not whether Donald Trump resembles this or that fascist leader of the past, but the extent to which the movement supporting him draws support from, and at the same time strengthens, America’s own open and proudly fascist movement. As she wrote in 1990, “The neo-Nazis’ ideology and activities are certainly ‘extreme,’ but they exist along a racist continuum on which it is difficult to draw a line.” Over the last quarter-century, Langer says, “the movement has only grown and deepened, coming closer to the mainstream on a lot of issues, especially immigration.” Indeed, Trump is now embraced by both white nationalists and—despite his issuing what Speaker of the House Paul Ryan called a “text-

book example of a racist comment”—the current leadership of the GOP.

Near the end of her 1990 report, Langer observed that “anyone writing on Nazis or anything connected with Nazis is invariably asked the one question everyone always wonders about, the dread question, the Sinclair Lewis question, ‘Can it happen here?’ and in being confronted with this several times in the course of this work, I came to see that the key word in the question is obviously ‘it.’ If ‘it’ means another Hitler, the answer is probably no, if only because history does not literally repeat. But there are subtler forms of repetition. In a period of declining national authority manifested everywhere from our weakening social structure to our worsening economic position, a movement is stirring that explains it all, and people are starting to listen.”

—Richard Kreitner

### Brexit Divorce Proceedings

Calvin Trillin  
Deadline Poet

Stunned Britons say, “This all takes time. It may be years before we’re through.” “What’s done is done,” the EU says, “We’d like to see the back of you.”



The Nation.

# Tying Trump Down





*If there is to be a true critical mass against Trumpism, it will  
spring from the growing national protest movement.*

by **SASHA ABRAMSKY**

**W**HEN CERTAINTIES CRUMBLE, IT'S OFTEN ON THE STREETS THAT THE MOST COHERENT narratives emerge. One crumbling certainty is that Americans don't elect fascists. *That's a 1930s European thing*, we have long thought. This certainty seems to have prevented Trump's GOP rivals from calling him out with the "F-word" while they still had a chance to block his rise, even as he asked supporters to swear a personal loyalty oath to him at rallies, retweeted Mussolini quotes, curried favor with white-nationalist groups, showed profound contempt for the separation of powers that defines the American democratic process, and repeatedly injected the language of violence into his speeches.

That same certainty also stopped Republicans, until it was far too late to be effective, from explicitly denouncing Trump's racism and demagoguery—even as he called Mexican immigrants "rapists" and decried Muslim immigrants as a fifth column. That same certainty has allowed television journalists to cover Trump either as entertainment—very profitable entertainment—or as just another suit in the crowd, rather than as an existential threat to the country's democratic heritage. That same certainty led Hillary Clinton, during most of the primary season, to go no further than labeling the billionaire rabble-rouser "dangerous" and "risky." Only in the days leading up to the California primary, after Trump declared that she should be imprisoned and that, as president, he would instruct his attorney general to begin investigating her, did Clinton finally denounce his dictatorial ambitions.

Throughout most of the primary season, there was a kind of quiescence to the mainstream, inside-the-Beltway approach to Trump, a crippling rhetorical caution in the face of a full-frontal assault on the culture of tolerance and pluralism. Trump's attack on Judge Gonzalo Curiel and his outrageous response to the Orlando massacre have, at long last, galvanized mainstream political voices, from the president on down, to call him out more forcefully. In recent weeks, Trump's abysmal fund-raising numbers, falling approval ratings, and weak campaign organization, along with the swirling allegations that his family may be personally profiting from his campaign, have added a new vigor to the stop-Trump effort within the GOP.

And yet, despite rumors of a delegate coup at the Republican National Convention, it still seems unlikely that

**"I see the  
emergence  
of a popular  
front....  
Trump and  
the Trump  
movement  
have unified  
these existing  
fronts."**

—Nicole Carty,  
Momentum Training

*Sasha Abramsky  
is a frequent  
Nation contributor  
and the author,  
most recently, of  
The House of  
20,000 Books.*

a critical mass of GOP leaders will break with their presumptive nominee. And the Clinton campaign alone—reliant as the Clintons have historically been on focus groups and polling to craft their messaging—may not be able to marshal the political and cultural energies necessary to defeat Trump's movement. If there is to be a true critical mass against Trumpism—a countervailing force that takes on not just the candidate, who could implode in the coming months, but the toxic forces he has unleashed—it will spring from the national protest movement that has been coalescing for months now.

"I see the emergence of a popular front," predicts Nicole Carty of Momentum Training, a group that schools activists on strategy around the country. "What I think has happened: Trump and the Trump movement have unified these existing fronts. All of these movements were operating on their own before Trump. [But] he's given them a focal point. They're moving as one. They're thinking systemically. It allows them to understand how their front line is part of a shared front line."

Many trade unions, energized by successful campaigns for an increased minimum wage, have joined the protests. And behind the scenes, other groups like Color of Change have started lobbying corporations that have long embraced the principles of diversity, including Google, Coca-Cola, and Apple, to withdraw their sponsorship from the Republican National Convention. As Trump neared and then passed the magic delegate number for securing the nomination, a number of sponsors did stop the flow of dollars and announced they would not be a presence in Cleveland in July.

On the East Coast, it was Trump's hometown, New York City, that became the focal point for the anti-Trump



movement. Organizers knew that on April 14, the state GOP would be holding a gala at the Grand Hyatt Hotel on 42nd Street in Manhattan. With a few weeks' lead time, dozens of groups around the city began planning actions for that day. Some focused on mobilizing for demonstrations, others on hand-paintinging banners in art collectives, still others on civil-disobedience training.

On the afternoon of the 14th, they gathered by the thousands. Fight for \$15 activists, reveling in their recent success in persuading New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to sign a \$15 minimum-wage bill, marched east along 42nd Street from Times Square. Striking Verizon workers—who had greeted and hailed Bernie Sanders the day before—paraded toward the Hyatt as well. Also converging on 42nd Street were Muslim groups, Black Lives Matter activists, Latino organizations, supporters of Planned Parenthood, and protesters from MoveOn.org, which had already responded to Trump's first call for a ban on Muslims entering the country last December by getting more than 1,600 progressive leaders to join a campaign based on the slogan "We Are Better Than This."

Still more groups were brought together by the Stop Trump National Network, a Facebook-based organization that one founding member describes as "a crowdsourcing place."

White antiracists from Showing Up for Racial Justice, a national network founded in 2009 that now claims 25,000 members nationwide, also came en masse. "The first five years, we had only six chapters and 200 members," said one national organizer, who didn't want his name used because he was organizing civil-disobedience strategies. Then, after the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, SURJ's membership soared—and with Trump's rise, those numbers have continued to climb; the network now has 150 chapters. "We see this as a great opportunity," the organizer continued, "because Trump represents this white, racist demagoguery. He's saying immigrants are the problem, and immigrants and Muslims are the No. 1 threat to our personal safety and security. There are echoes of the rise of the Third Reich. We know we can't sit on the sidelines here."

"The rhetoric has gotten so hostile toward Arabs and Muslims and immigrants," said Kayla Santosuosso, the 26-year-old deputy director of the Arab American Association of New York and speaking as an organizer for SURJ. "When it was announced that the GOP gala was hosting Trump, it was kind of like the Bat-Signal. Everyone jumped in. It feels organic; it doesn't feel orches-

trated. And most of all, it's inclusive. There are some parallels between what's going on now and Occupy. You're seeing a groundswell of people."

"There's a trend where direct action is exciting again," noted another organizer, 33-year-old Vida, a social worker who works with immigrants, adolescents, the LGBTQ community, and homeless youth. "People have been digging into creating a shared language, a theory, an activist culture."

Because of the tight security cordon around the Grand Hyatt, none of the young activists who had trained for civil disobedience managed to get close enough to the hotel to realize their plans. Yet the point was made: Anti-Trumpism was now a cause capable of bringing many thousands of people, from many walks of life and with an array of political priorities, out to protest.

"We're New Yorkers," said Kaitlin Campbell of SURJ New York, who got involved in organizing a year ago. "And we don't want hate speech used to politicians' advantage here." Campbell is well versed in the teachings of Saul Alinsky and the mass-protest ideas of Frances Fox Piven. The Occupy movement, she believes, was a classic "moment of the whirlwind." Now, five years on, she thinks the anti-Trump moment has similar potential, "creating moral dilemmas that make [people] choose sides."

**P**RIOR TO THE NEW YORK ACTION, THERE had been several high-profile protests, including civil disobedience, at Trump rallies across the country, most notably in Chicago, Arizona, and Wisconsin. Now, with the end of the primary season and the start of the general election, that activism is going national. "What we saw in Chicago and Arizona set off a wave of motivation," says Sandy Nurse, a New Yorker active in the anti-Trump movement. "People are activated to do something."

Even in historically conservative regions like Appalachia and Western Pennsylvania, organizers have started carving out counternarratives against Trump. In college towns, in particular, groups have formed to protest at Trump events whenever they're announced.

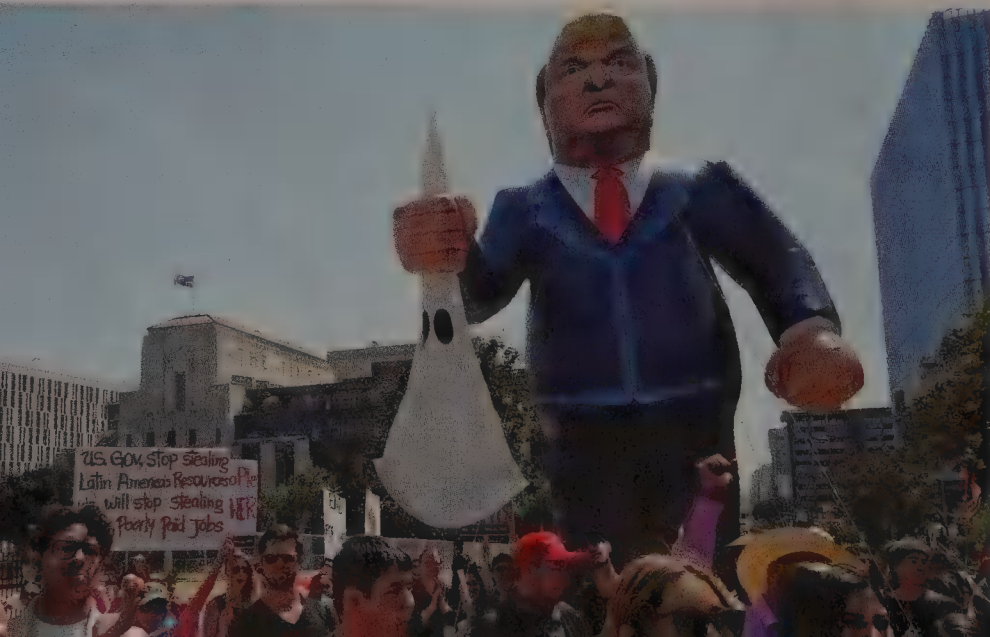
In the small Appalachian town of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, Lynn Cockett, a professor of communications at Juniata College, and one of her colleagues set up a SURJ chapter to counter Trump's appeal. They were also animated by what had happened in their part of Pennsylvania in the wake of the racially motivated mass shooting in Charleston, South Carolina, by a white supremacist. That attack led to a political backlash against public displays of the Confederate flag. But while politicians inveighed against the symbol, in small Appalachian towns the flags began to appear all over, and racially inflammatory rhetoric took on a life of its own. In essence, alienated locals were giving the middle finger to the political establishment. In that sense, it fit the Trumpist moment perfectly.

In response, SURJ activists designed and distributed a Unity flag to oppose the outbreak of Confederate nostalgia and the coarsening of racial discourse. "We like to refer to ourselves as accidental activists," Cockett said. "I've always had liberal politics, but I've never done activist work."

**"The rhetoric has gotten so hostile toward Arabs and Muslims and immigrants."**

—Kayla Santosuosso, SURJ

**"I don't really mind actions": An anti-Trump rally in Los Angeles, May 1.**





“Our intention,” fellow organizer Susan Prill added, “is to work more on building community locally—doing door-to-door work, doing outreach, and trying to build bridges to counteract the general tenor. This isn’t just about Trump; it’s about the larger issues.”

**T**RUMPISM, IN ALL ITS VULGAR HORRORS—some overtly neofascist, some just clown-like—has now swamped the GOP. In the historically depraved calculus of Paul Ryan, Mitch McConnell, and most other Republican leaders, power clearly wins over decency or ideological coherence. Which means that Trump is being normalized; that his extremist ideas are now an accepted and acceptable part of the GOP conversation; that Islamophobia and all the other bile he spews can now be advocated and embraced, without apology, in polite society. This is how a politics of barbarism, of undiluted majoritarian tyranny, emerges.

Will Trump succeed in converting the GOP, against the will of many of its current grandees, into an explicitly ethno-nationalist, conspiracist, protectionist organization? If so, he will have accomplished a hostile takeover of one of the country’s two major parties, morphing it into a party that has more in common with, say, France’s National Front than with the British Tories or German Christian Democrats.

But even if Trump loses this fall, he has already unleashed venomous forces, allowing the worst, most paranoid elements from America’s past—elements that have long been a core part of the GOP base but have, in recent decades, been successfully, if barely, contained—back into the heart of modern political discourse. Unlike Pat Buchanan, who played to the same crowd but failed to generate crossover appeal in the 1990s, or George Wallace, who ran a third-party segregationist candidacy in 1968 but failed to take states outside the South, the reality-TV entertainer has worked out a way to deliver his toxic message that appeals to a disturbingly large number of voters.

And thus the necessity of urgent protest. If wonks alone cannot stop the rise of a would-be dictator, or educate the public at speed about the political perils of the moment, then a mobilized movement must take up that challenge, by framing this election as a struggle for the very soul of the Republic.

By themselves, the protests that have emerged in one city and state after another since last winter aren’t big enough yet to transform the political discourse. And there is a risk that a series of scattershot demonstrations—especially those, like the one in San Jose in early June, that turn violent—will simply drive more conservative voters into Trump’s so-called silent majority. That’s certainly what the GOP candidate hopes, as he eggs on both the protests and his fans’ reactions, fueling the flames of a political street conflict the likes of which this country hasn’t seen in decades.

But if the protests grow in frequency, size, and geographic diversity in the coming months—if they become more than just Lilliputian annoyances buzzing about the Trumpian giant—then, in conjunction with other forms of organizing, they could provide much of the emotional

“This isn’t just about Trump; it’s about the larger issues.”

—Susan Prill

Bringing it all back home: Trump in New York City, March 19.

energy needed to counter Trumpism during the slash-and-burn campaign that will unfold through the November election.

When Trump announced his candidacy last summer and declared that Mexican immigrants were rapists and criminals, immigrant-rights groups at first took him as something of a joke. “You’d think that starting off with something so racist and inflammatory was a complete no-no,” says Apolonio Morales, political director of CHIRLA.

CHIRLA’s offices are on West Third Street, just north of downtown. Along the cream-and-brown-painted exterior of the building are a series of murals. One shows a reclining Statue of Liberty, along with a hammer and the stars from the American flag. Another shows an old Spanish galleon, adorned with the red cross of St. James, crossing the oceans to conquer the *indígenos*. In the waiting area are framed photos from recent large-scale immigrant-rights protests.

On July 10 of last year, Trump held an event at the Luxe Hotel, in LA’s fashionable Westside. That was when CHIRLA’s Action Fund began mobilizing, launching a “No Hate in LA” campaign. It has been building momentum ever since.

This May Day—two days after anti-Trump protesters noisily protested the state GOP convention in the Bay Area town of Burlingame, barricading roads and forcing Trump to abandon his car and scramble, on foot, toward the back entrance—thousands of people marched through downtown Los Angeles. Brought to the streets by organizations like the Service Em-



employees International Union, Unite Here, CHIRLA’s Action Fund, and a slew of other groups, the protesters marched along the industrial strip overlooking Highway 101 and onto Olvera Street, the old heart of Spanish LA, waving signs that read “Vote for Hope, Not Hate”; “I’m a Dealer of Change. I’m Latino and I Vote”; and, simply, “Dump Trump.”

Outside police headquarters, the May Day marchers organized a call-and-response, each line spoken into a megaphone and then repeated by the demonstrators: “It is our duty to fight for freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love and protect each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

“This is what democracy looks like!” the crowd chanted.

At the corner of Alameda and Aliso, the march stopped one last time. At the front, youth organizers unfurled a huge black-and-white-striped paper banner, lettered in red with the words “Wall of Intolerance.” At a signal, dozens of youngsters ran forward, tearing right through the wall and ripping it to shreds.

By early May, Trump had effectively wrapped up the nomination. But with the California primary still to come, he began barnstorming the West Coast on June 7, arguing that he, unlike every previous GOP presidential candidate since 1992, could capture the Golden State this fall. Trump made outlandish



claims—including that California didn't have a drought problem. And he promised one audience after another that he would seal off their state from Mexico. But wherever he went, he was dogged by protests.

In large part because of the efforts of the Immigrant Voter Project and other rights groups, Latinos are registering to vote in record numbers this election, according to the National Association of Elected and Appointed Officials, the Pew Research Center, and others. There are also huge voter-registration drives under way in Asian and African migrant communities. And nowhere is that more the case than in the Golden State. In the first three months of 2016, says CHIRLA's Morales, 850,000 new voters, mostly young and Latino, registered in California. And while Trump's message will win him the undying support of California's hard-core GOP primary voters, it is unlikely to play well in the state as a whole come the general election. Trump's strategy, Morales argues, "is racial polarization. It's about making working white folks look at what's happened to them and providing simple answers—pointing to a community and saying, 'That's your problem.'" Morales doesn't think this will fly in 2016. "You can't have enough white male working-class voters to offset the numbers of people of color. We don't live in that country anymore. We've created allies and partnerships with labor, with community groups, to ensure we fight against this kind of hate."

The anti-Trump coalitions are determined to turn the GOP convention this summer into a creative carnival of protest. But they also want to generate "echo actions" in cities around the country. "Simultaneous protests—that's how we usually operate," says Angelica Salas, president of the CHIRLA Action Fund. CHIRLA will be focusing its efforts on Nevada.

A young New York organizer with the online group MPower Change, which works primarily within Muslim communities, puts it starkly: "It's up to us to draw down on the point that this isn't just about Trump—it's an indictment of the entire system that allows people like this to be front-runners for president from a major party."

In Los Angeles, Salas agrees. "We are transferring all our energy to engage our community to communicate with voters why Trump can't be the president of a country as diverse as ours," she says. "We stand by the values of this country. We have to stop Trump, and stop future Trumps, people who appeal to the worst divisions. We see it as a very real possibility that without our action, he could become president of the United States. If we have Trump as president, how do we ensure that our community is safe? We have to fight in the courts. Fight in the streets. Do mass actions."

"We've seen a movement of people that's gotten stronger and emboldened pushing back against hateful rhetoric," says Cristina Jimenez of United We Dream, the country's largest network of immigrant youth, which has been involved in the demonstrations from the start. "We will push back and expose it and speak against it. We're having mobilizations in New York, Miami, Houston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and many more, to make clear where we stand and all that's at stake for communities of color and women and workers." ■

# THE PSYCHIC WO

T

HE SUMMER AFTER MY FRESHMAN YEAR OF college, I decided it was time for me to read everything I could get my hands on in order to become a respectable black intellectual. At Barnes & Noble, I grabbed the only book by bell hooks in stock in the "African-American Interests" section—*Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*. "I have found myself saying again and again that mental health is the revolutionary anti-racist frontier African Americans must collectively explore," hooks wrote. She touched on issues of self-hatred, depression, addiction, and emotional well-being. I promptly decided it was one of the most important books I had ever read. Whatever was hurting black people, I wanted to fight. But I soon forgot about the book. I knew people who were in prison; I didn't know anyone who was depressed.

And that included myself. Starting when I was 16, I had occasional panic attacks. Even so, I failed to connect *Rock My Soul* to anything in my experience. I saw in hooks's words something plaguing black communities, not me. My panic attacks were frightening, but whenever they struck, I told myself they were nothing to worry about. After all, I was, by now, a college student. Emotionally stable. Perfectly sane.

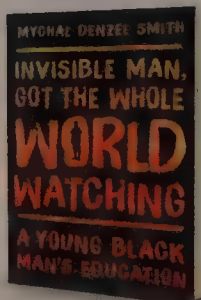
Three years later, *Rock My Soul* became newly relevant. It had always been difficult for me to maintain interest in school, but I had done enough to get by. Now I was finding it harder to pretend. At some point in senior year, I stopped showing up.

I was the editor in chief of our student paper, and my work there was the only thing that got me out of bed on the days when I wanted to sleep until 4, 5, or 6 p.m. Often, I would return home and open up a bottle of cheap vodka that I had started keeping around. I didn't drink in earnest until I was 21—not because I was a stickler for legality, but because I was scared that getting drunk meant losing control. By the beginning of 2008, I had abandoned that fear and would drink that ice-cold vodka more days than not.

Every day, I was lying to people. Responding to a "How are you?" with "I'm fine" was enough to satisfy most people. The more I lied, the more I wanted to believe the lie—and the less I could. Every time I said I was fine, I saw myself dying. Sometimes I saw myself intentionally crashing my car. Sometimes I saw myself jumping from a tall building, frightened and free, feeling the wind beneath me.

I reached a point where I wanted to talk, but I'd pushed away the people it was hard to lie to. I stopped answering my mother's phone calls. The vodka in my freezer stopped being helpful.

I had never smoked weed before. But the less comfort drinking brought me, the more curious I became. The first time I tried it, it didn't have much of an effect. The second time, I wanted to make sure I felt it. So I inhaled sharply. Moments later, I noticed that something was off in the middle of my chest. Soon, there was tingling in my



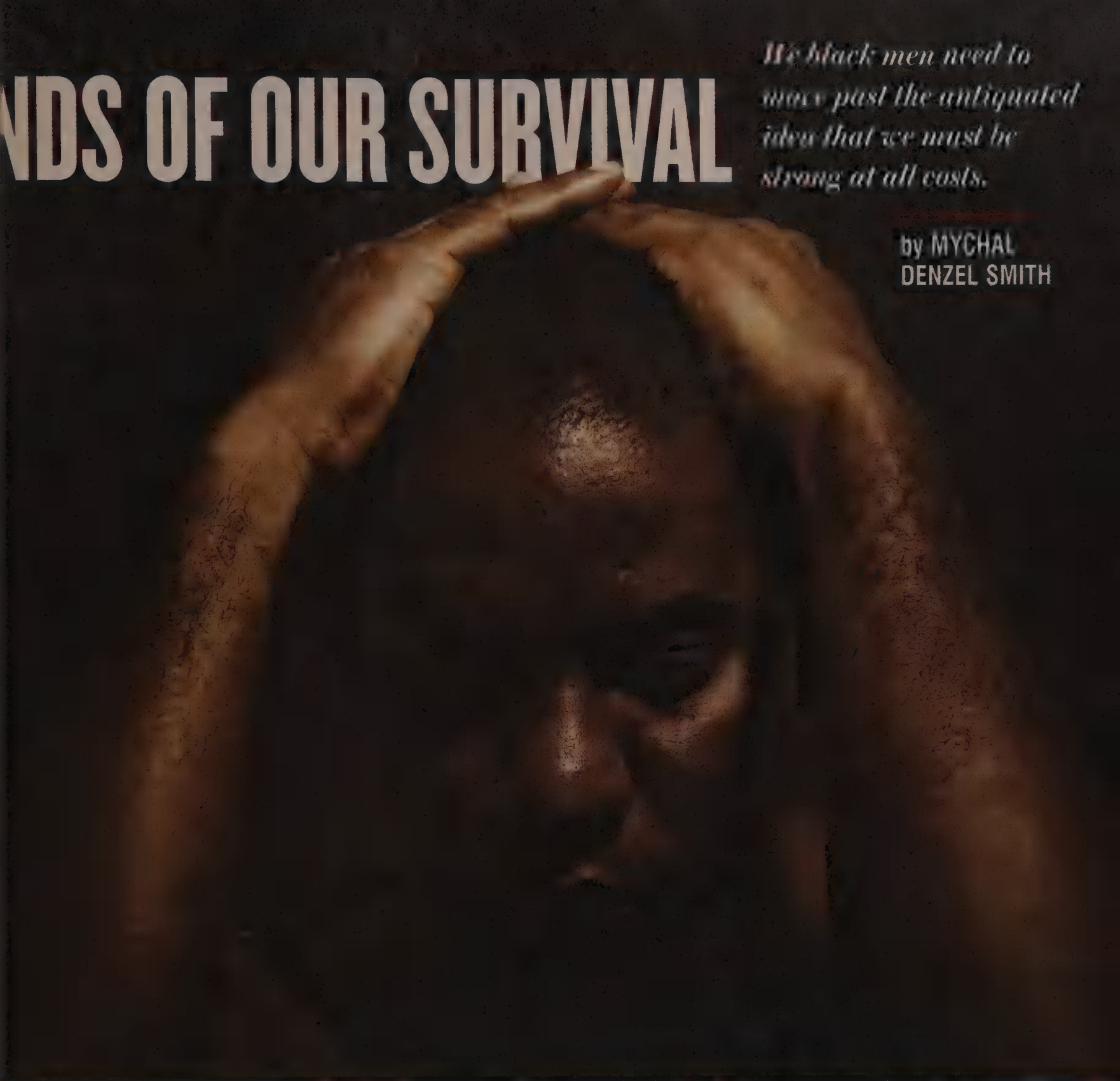
Mychal Denzel Smith is a contributing writer to *The Nation* and a Knobel Fellow at the *Nation* Institute. This article is adapted from his new book, *Invisible Man, Got the Whole World Watching* (Nation Books).



# NDSD OF OUR SURVIVAL

*We black men need to move past the antiquated idea that we must be strong at all costs.*

by MYCHAL  
DENZEL SMITH



left arm. I couldn't get enough air. In desperation, I asked my roommate Justin to take me to the hospital. The doctor asked me if I'd done anything unusual that evening. "I smoked weed for the first time," I said. "I guess you learned your lesson, right?" he asked. "Yeah," I managed. Then the doctor left, the nurses dismissed me, and Justin drove me home.

It was the first time since I was 16 that a panic attack landed me in the hospital. Since it was helped along by the weed, I wrote it off as an anomaly. But by the end of March, it was getting harder to make the lie believable. With increasing frequency, my parents asked me if I was sure I was going to graduate on time. I hadn't purchased a cap and gown. I still wasn't going to class. I hadn't even pretended to revise my thesis. "Yeah, I should," I told

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**I knew  
people who  
were in  
prison. I  
didn't know  
anyone  
who was  
depressed.**

them. "I'll have to do a summer course to finish my thesis, but I'll be able to walk."

To tell the truth would have been to admit failure. I didn't want to face my mother's disappointment or my father's lecture. I was their firstborn, and I was part of the first generation in both families to have several members attend college. My graduation would be a sign of progress. But I wasn't even making it out of bed most days.

I went home one weekend and found my mother in the backyard, getting her plants ready for summer. "So how are we doing this—when school is over, are you coming back here?" she asked. "What room are you taking?" I started crying. "What's wrong, my child?"

"I don't know... *everything*," I replied. Her hands were caked in soil, so she called my father over to embrace me.



He hugged me and walked me back into the house. I sat on the couch and cried until I physically couldn't any longer.

I told my parents what I felt—some of it. I told them I wasn't sleeping, that there was no way I was going to graduate on time, that I felt like a failure, that I was afraid of disappointing them and everyone else. My father said, "It sounds like you're going through some sort of depression."

There was the word. I was relieved to hear it, because what I was feeling had a name that I could say. But I still didn't know what to do about it.

**I** NOW KNOW MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED WITH DEPRESSION, BUT that's a retroactive designation. When I was 21, no one in my life would have said they suffered from depression. Plenty of people said they were "depressed," which generally meant "really sad," but no one would cop to a mental illness. The only people I "knew" who had gone to a psychiatrist and talked about it openly were in Woody Allen movies. For several decades, white people in the professional and artistic classes have been able to wear their weekly analysis sessions as a badge of intellect, while the rest of us have had to struggle with the stigma of mental illness—a stigma that is especially strong in black communities. Black people have every reason to be distrustful of mental-health care in this country: Psychiatric institutions have largely functioned as another form of prison, and mental illnesses are often attributed to black people despite their completely rational behaviors. But that doesn't mean we don't suffer, often in silence.

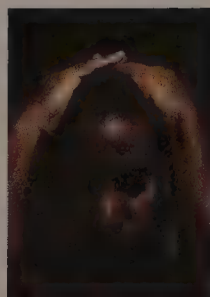
My family wanted to help. Aunt Gay, my mother's twin, called the next day to reassure me that she was proud of me. Then Darius, one of Aunt Gay's sons, called and said that I had nothing to be ashamed of, that I had accomplished more than so many young black men get the chance to do. I appreciated the pep talks and told them as much, but they weren't what I needed. I asked Aunt Gay to tell Antaeus, her oldest son, to call me.

"How do you do it?" I said as soon as he did. Confused, Antaeus asked, "How do I do what?" Crying, I answered: "How do you live without Demetri?"

Demetri was born on February 27, 1982, the first son of Uncle Clayton, my mother's only brother. Demetri was the best at everything: basketball, football, video games. I would practice *Mortal Kombat* and *Street Fighter* at home, trying to get good enough to beat him on our next trip to DC. But I looked up to Demetri because he didn't tease as hard as everyone else. I felt protected around him.

In March of 1999, my mother left for a few days. On occasion, she would go to see her family without us, so that didn't strike me as abnormal. Then my father called my brother and me to come downstairs. Demetri had been shot, he told us. Seven times. I didn't grasp the gravity of the situation because he never said, "Demetri is dead." Instead, he gave us a lecture about why he was always telling us that "choices" were important in life. (Demetri had sold drugs before, though he wasn't at the time of the shooting.) My big cousin had been shot, and my father was admonishing me about "choices."

I didn't learn that Demetri was dead until the three of us arrived in DC. Up to that point, I thought we were just going to visit him in the hospital. I walked into the church for the funeral and immediately started crying. We had been to a number of funerals in my 12 short years, but none with circumstances this tragic. I finally made it up to the casket where Demetri lay dead, but my body felt out of place and time. I wanted to be anywhere else.



**Sometimes it feels like we black men have internalized the perception of ourselves as unfeeling brutes.**

At Aunt Connie's house afterward, Uncle Clayton had a little to drink. He had already lost the love of his life, Demetri's mother, and now he had to bury his son. "You still got that jump shot?" he asked me. I tried a smile for him. The last time he'd visited us in Virginia Beach, we'd played basketball in the driveway, and he was impressed by my jump shot. "Next time I come down, I wanna see it, you hear me?" He was trying to make *me* feel better. I struggled through a half-hearted laugh, nodded my head, and said, "Yeah, OK."

We never got the chance. Uncle Clayton died the next year.

I still had Demetri in my heart and memories, and I thought that was all I needed. But four years later, I had to acknowledge the pain and ask Antaeus—the only person still around who had been as deeply affected by his death as I was—how he made it through each day without him.

We talked for probably an hour. Antaeus told me how hard it was, why he'd gotten a tattoo of Demetri's nickname on his forearm, why we had to keep going. It helped—a little—to know I wasn't alone.

I heard from Aunt Connie next. She started with the familiar pep talk, but when I started talking about Demetri, things changed. "You like to write, don't you?" she said. "Then you use those words. You use those words to make sure what happened to Demetri don't have to happen to any other black boys."

**B**LACK PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES PRIDE ourselves on the fact that we have survived despite having every imaginable form of violence inflicted on us. We've made it through slavery and lynchings, rape and Jim Crow, poverty and police dogs, fire hoses and jail cells, and we have raised families and created culture that is emulated (and stolen) the world over. Even with all the odds stacked against us, we have persevered through the strength of our collective will and our faith in God. But neither will nor faith can heal the psychic wounds of that survival.

While black women are expected to be strong enough to shoulder the emotional needs of the entire community, men inherit a sense of masculinity that teaches stoicism as a virtue. Generations of black boys and men are walking around with turmoil swelling inside them, ready to explode at any minute. "The violence done to black boys is the abusive insistence, imposed on them by family and by society, that they not feel," bell hooks writes in *Rock My Soul*. I learned very early on to suppress my emotions. I was a sensitive child; the slightest bit of teasing from my big cousins, whose approval I desperately wanted, would set me off in tears. So I tried to laugh along or be silent.

And I learned by example. My father was a picture-perfect example of masculine authority. My brother and I knew him as a dutiful provider and a strict disciplinarian. I can only guess now at what made him afraid, what caused him pain, what trauma he'd lived through to become the man he did. He always said we could talk to him about anything, but he never opened up to us—and I learned to never open up, either.

I always waited until my pain was unbearable, until it left me facedown and sinking. Then things would come



# *Who is* **HILLARY CLINTON?**

*Two Decades of Answers From the Left*



INTRODUCTION BY KATHA POLLITT  
EDITED BY RICHARD KREITNER



***A MUST-READ FOR THE  
2016 ELECTION SEASON***



pouring out of me and I'd feel much better, but I never carried that lesson forward. I wanted to change this pattern, but I didn't know how.

Sometimes it feels like the problem is that we black men have internalized the perception of ourselves as unfeeling brutes. Sometimes it feels like the problem is our commitment to an antiquated idea of strength. But when we do speak, who listens? Or, more critically: When we speak, what do people hear?

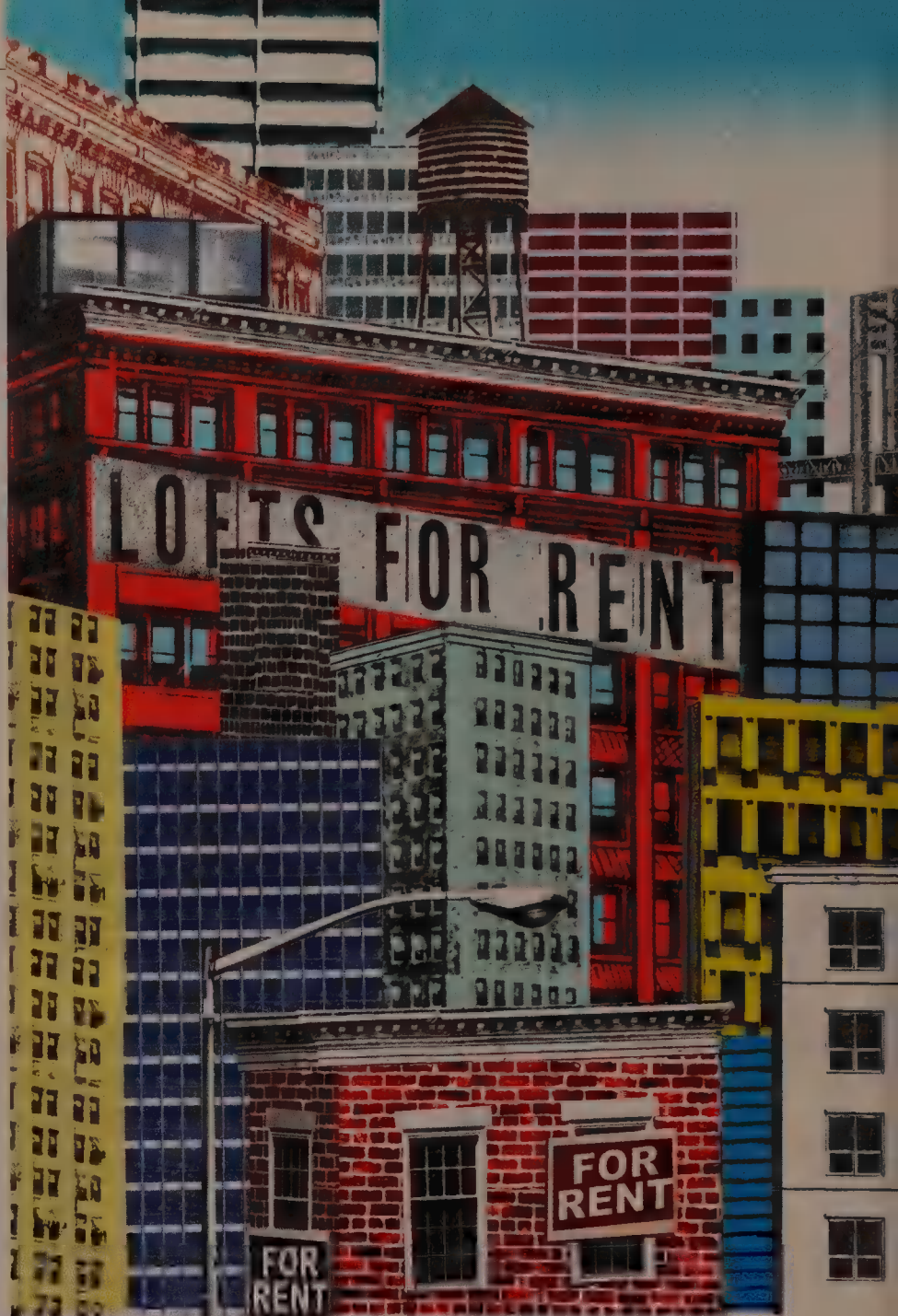
**H**IP-HOP IS THE BIGGEST CULTURAL PHENOMENON of the past half-century. Rappers get criticized for their materialism, sexism, homophobia, and glorification of gangster lifestyles—and there is plenty of merit to that critique. But we're all guilty of reducing our image of rappers to caricatures. When they tell us what's wrong, do we listen?

When the Notorious B.I.G. was a "nigga rappin' 'bout blunts and broads / Tits and bras, ménage à trois, sex in expensive cars," people paid attention. When he told us about his "Suicidal Thoughts," we brushed it aside. We turned "Cash Rules Everything Around Me" into a money-making anthem, without taking note of Inspectah Deck saying: "Though I don't know why I chose to smoke sess / I guess that's the time when I'm not depressed / But I'm still depressed and I ask, What's it worth?" When Tupac was hollering "Thug Life," everyone from vice presidential candidates to my parents wanted him censored, but they couldn't be found when he said: "I smoke a blunt to take the pain out / And if I wasn't high I'd probably try to blow my brains out." Jay Z and Kanye West's album *Watch the Throne* was dismissed by some critics as "luxury rap," but there's nothing luxurious about Jay Z asking: "Where the fuck is the press? Where the fuck is the Pres? / Either they don't know or don't care, I'm fucking depressed."

When T.I. kept getting arrested on gun and drug charges, did anyone ask whether his behavior was the result of having witnessed so many people in his life die or go to prison while his talent made him a millionaire celebrity, even as survivor's guilt ate away at him?

Who would we be if we understood mental illness, if we could offer support and had access to all the resources needed to address these common but unspoken struggles? I got lucky: My family cared and supported me, even if they didn't always understand. Through social media, I found a community—starting with the poet and mental-health advocate Bassey Ikpi—that made me feel less alone and taught me there were ways to heal. And I had enough resources at my disposal to make that healing possible.

That's not true for everyone, and it's especially not true for black boys trying to become black men in America. But we can end this deadly lack of care. We can build communities that prioritize mental health and encourage the understanding that depression isn't a sign of weakness, but an illness like any other. And we can fight to ensure that proper medication; therapists and psychiatrists versed in racism and gender oppression; and facilities that don't mimic prisons are available to us all. But first we have to start talking about what we need. ■



## MAKING CHANGE, F

*New York Communities for Change helped pioneer the*

by SARAH  
JAFJE

*Sarah Jaffe is a  
Nation Institute  
fellow and the  
author of the forth-  
coming Necessary  
Trouble:  
Americans in  
Revolt (Nation  
Books).*

**T**HE GIANT SIGN FLUTTERING IN THE WIND read "Espinal, Don't Gentrify E NY!" Rachel Rivera, a resident of Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood, held up one end of the sign; Lorna Blake, also of East New York, held the other. They were marching on April 13 to the district office of New York City Councilman Rafael Espinal with other members of New York Communities for Change (NYCC) as well as Make the Road New York and several building-trades unions. Their mission: to press Espinal into voting against a rezoning plan that they feared would accelerate gentrification. As if to underscore this point, white hipsters occasionally stopped to snap iPhone photos of the protest.

Rivera wore a bright-orange NYCC T-shirt under a parka and over sweats—she'd dressed comfortably, she said, for the main part of the action. Once at Espinal's





## CITIES RISING

zation, one that served to highlight its evolving strategy for tackling the many ways that inequality is created and perpetuated, in New York City and across the country.

"We have a goal of trying to target a trillion dollars in capital," Westin explained regarding the Hedge Clippers strategy. "Whether it's real-estate capital, hedge-fund capital, JPMorgan Chase capital, or McDonald's capital—we're going after a trillion dollars in wealth from the 1 percent, from the richest white men on earth, and actually putting that money back into our communities."

The Hedge Clippers, the Fight for \$15, and the fight for affordable housing are the linchpins of NYCC's strategy, three ways to answer the question of how to redistribute wealth and power back to working-class people of color. They're examples of how one group is looking beyond the small, incremental campaigns typical of organizing in low-income communities of color, and aiming instead to actually challenge the structures of power in the city.

**N**YCC FIRST APPEARED IN 2010, BUT ITS ORIGIN extends back decades. It rose from the ashes of the Association of Community Organizers for Reform Now, which, at its peak, comprised a network of community groups under a national umbrella organization. ACORN had its roots in the welfare-rights movement of the 1960s and '70s, and it fought for affordable housing, challenged predatory subprime lenders, and registered low-income people to vote. The organization was destroyed after right-wing "sting" artist James O'Keefe publicized deceptively edited videos purporting to show some ACORN members advising a "pimp" on the best way to conduct his criminal activities. Lawsuits vindicated the association, but too late; ACORN collapsed in 2010 after its funding evaporated. But around the country, former ACORN members have launched new groups, many of which have risen to prominence through their work alongside Occupy and the Black Lives Matter movement.

NYCC was shaped by those movements as well, said Westin, 32, who began organizing with ACORN more than 10 years ago. From Occupy came a sharpened analysis of power and capital; from the movement for black lives came the idea of reparations for the low-income people of color who make up NYCC's membership. "The shared analysis is that it benefits the wealthiest people on earth to have people in powerless positions," Westin said.

The typical approach of community organizations, Westin continued—especially those inspired by the legendary organizer Saul Alinsky—is to concentrate on winning locally, without attempting a broader critique of the real people in power. Mark and Paul Engler, in their book *This Is an Uprising*, describe it as a focus on local groups and a distrust of movements. But in the current political moment, NYCC and many other groups are thinking bigger, bolder, and more structurally.

"Right now, less-institutionalized forces like NYCC push the envelope of what's possible," said Bob Master,



# FROM THE ASPHALT UP

*t for \$15. Now it has a new and even tougher challenge.*

office, she and several others—NYCC executive director Jonathan Westin; Bertha Lewis, founder of the Black Institute; and seven NYCC comrades—sat down and refused to move. "They say, 'Go away!' We say, 'No way!'" the crowd chanted as police swept in and handcuffed the protesters. Espinal was nowhere to be seen.

That was on Wednesday. On Thursday, fresh from jail, Westin and NYCC members were in the streets again, this time as part of a nationwide day of action in the Fight for \$15, the movement that NYCC had launched with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in 2012. And on that very same day came the announcement that, after a push from the NYCC-backed group the Hedge Clippers, New York City's largest public-pension fund had voted to pull its money out of hedge funds. It was a particularly busy week for the community-based organi-

**“We’re  
going after  
a trillion  
dollars  
in wealth  
from the 1  
percent.”**

—Jonathan Westin



political director of the Communications Workers of America District 1. "When you take some risks, possibilities open up that you weren't aware of." One case in point: NYCC's decision to enter a collaboration that, while not without its difficulties, launched a nationwide movement for higher wages.

**I**N FEBRUARY OF 2012, NYCC MEMBERS RALLIED AROUND A PICKET LINE outside the Golden Farm supermarket in Brooklyn's Kensington neighborhood, demanding an end to wage theft and proper treatment for the supermarket's immigrant workers. A marching band played alongside chanting workers; future Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams and City Councilman Brad Lander addressed the crowd. The protest was part of a broader campaign in which NYCC partnered with Local 338 of the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU) and the United Food and Commercial Workers to organize workers at several independent grocery stores. These businesses were small and often owned by people who were immigrants themselves; otherwise, the outline of what would become the Fight for \$15 was visible in this campaign and another to unionize car-wash workers, in which NYCC teamed with Make the Road New York and RWDSU. In each case, a union provided the funding and training and took in the organized workers as members, while NYCC, sometimes alongside other groups with a base in the community, organized horizontally across an industry rather than shop by shop, aiming to change the practices in a sector rather than just a single store.

"People were working 80 hours a week and still not being able to afford an apartment," Westin said. At the time, he was NYCC's organizing director, and he and the group's then-executive director, Jon Kest, thought that a bigger, broader campaign could work in the fast-food industry. They reached out to SEIU, which was looking for a national campaign to raise the issue of low wages to a new level, and a partnership was born, along with a plan for short, attention-grabbing strikes and a demand that would nearly double the workers' wages.

The first fast-food strike kicked off on the morning of November 29, 2012. Hundreds of workers walked off the job for a one-day strike, demanding "\$15 and a union." Outside the Wendy's in Brooklyn's Fulton Mall, fuschia-haired Pamela Flood led the chants. "I'm out here just to show people that you don't have to take \$7.25 an hour for your hard work," she told me then.

At the beginning of the campaign, NYCC and SEIU didn't pitch the demand for \$15 an hour and a union to elected officials. But as mayoral candidates and City Council members flocked to the picket lines to proclaim their support, it quickly became clear that workers were more likely to get \$15 through legislation than through companies like McDonald's ordering their franchisees to boost the wage. Yet there was a problem: New York City is barred by state law from raising its minimum wage, and Governor Andrew Cuomo staunchly opposed the hike.

As the campaign spread to more cities, SEIU began to take a higher profile in the media coverage, and the "days of action" tended to be coordinated across the country rather than tactically connected to any one city. This increased the potential for tensions in the movement, between the demands of a massive union and the needs of community organizations, which wield

less power and often are dependent on the union for resources. (Around the country, Fight for \$15 organizers have embarked on their own organizing campaign. Their demand: \$15 and a union.)

"I think the challenges exist around the fact that this is new for everybody," Westin said. "We're really trying to work with unions to bridge the gap between what's happening in the workplace and what's happening with people on the ground—housing issues and schools issues and immigration issues."

In 2014, Cuomo did an about-face and, one year later, took steps to raise the wages of fast-food workers and then of all New Yorkers. In his press conferences, Cuomo trumpeted the state's "leadership" on the issue, and certainly New York's workers were the first to demand \$15 and a union. But by the time the governor got around to acting, the Fight for \$15 had won raises in several major cities. For Cuomo, who is being investigated by US Attorney Preet Bharara, it was the perfect issue to seize on to win over some allies. (Indeed, SEIU spent some \$500,000 on advertising thanking Cuomo for his support.)

In the end, this combination of creative tactics, a willingness to make bold demands, and a new partnership model helped to shape the national movement in the Fight for \$15. And the national movement, in turn, transformed the \$15 minimum wage from a utopian goal to a sure bet for politicians seeking to boost their progressive credentials. The success of the Fight for \$15 and the Hedge Clippers has also burnished NYCC's star, but the housing battle might be its toughest challenge yet.

**The success of the Fight for \$15 has burnished NYCC's star, but the housing battle might be its toughest challenge yet.**

**Fast food forward!**  
Jonathan Westin fights for \$15 alongside members of NYCC and SEIU.

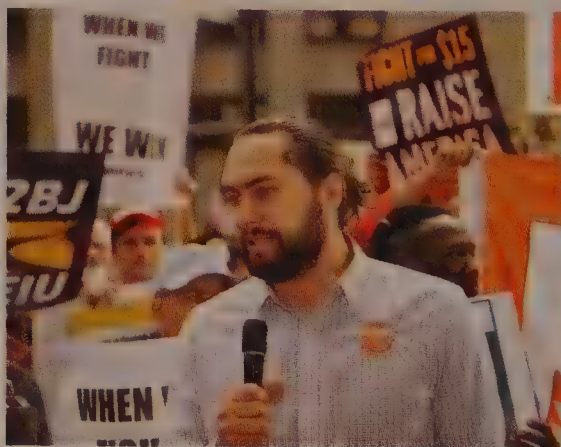
**R**ACHEL RIVERA DISCOVERED NYCC IN 2012, AFTER Hurricane Sandy destroyed her apartment. The group worked on Sandy relief from its Brooklyn office, and Rivera joined its campaign to secure relief funding. "I lost everything," said Rivera, who was stranded with her six children in a hotel for more than a year. She finally found a place in East New York that she could afford, but as she acknowledges, "the seven of us in that one-bedroom apartment is not easy."

Of late, it's getting even harder, as Rivera has felt pressure from her landlord to move out. Her apartment is rent-stabilized, but, scenting the rezoning in the air, local landlords have been planning to sell to developers who will build new high-rises. Under an "inclusionary zoning" plan put forward by Mayor Bill de Blasio, those high-rises will have to set aside a number of apartments for low-income renters, but Rivera said she doesn't make enough to qualify.

(The plan's definition of "affordable" is still beyond the reach of the poorest 20 percent of New Yorkers.) So Rivera joined the April 13 action to press her councilman, Rafael Espinal, to vote down the rezoning plan.

Despite these protests, the City Council passed the plan on April 20. "This is not an affordable housing plan, this is a gentrification plan," Rivera said in a statement sent out by NYCC. "[F]ar more market rate units will be created than affordable units."

From the moment de Blasio was elected mayor in 2013, it was clear that the fight for





affordable housing was going to be rough. While de Blasio advanced the most ambitious program of any of the mayoral candidates—helping win the support of allies like NYCC—the need remains far greater than anything his plans deliver. And without federal investment in public housing, and with an often-hostile state government led by Governor Cuomo, his administration's options for housing policy were limited from the start. But it was his appointment of Alicia Glen—former head of the Goldman Sachs Urban Investment Group—as the deputy mayor for housing and economic development that reminded community groups that they would have to keep up the pressure on de Blasio. The Real Affordability for All (RAFA) coalition, of which NYCC is an anchor member, came together shortly after the election and has pressed de Blasio and the state government on inclusionary zoning as well as rent regulations.

“We have members who used to live in Williamsburg who got pushed out here, people who did the trek from the Lower East Side to Williamsburg to Bushwick to East New York,” said Zachary Lerner, who coordinated the housing fight for NYCC. “This is where we had to put our foot down.” Lerner met with NYCC members and asked for their thoughts on keeping the community affordable; “affordable,” they replied, needed to mean affordable *to them*. They also wanted to make sure that construction jobs were accessible to local residents—a key reason the building-trades unions joined the coalition. The first march in East New York took place in May 2015, with NYCC calling for 50 percent of the new apartments to be rented at rates affordable to the surrounding community.

Despite the desire of NYCC and others to go beyond playing defense, they have largely been fighting on de Blasio's terms. RAFA was criticized for calling off a planned civil disobedience at City Hall just days before the vote on the mayor's inclusionary-zoning plan and then giving the plan its blessing. The deal that RAFA struck added a few useful provisions, but it mostly hinged on a study that de Blasio agreed to conduct with the coalition to investigate ways of achieving greater affordability.

**T**HE FIGHT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRESENTS other daunting challenges. As Matthew Lasner, associate professor of urban studies and planning at Hunter College, notes: “The only way to really achieve affordable housing [for] people earning low incomes [or] even moderate incomes in a big, expensive city like New York is through deep subsidies.” And the entity best suited to provide them is the government.

Ironically, public-housing projects, which would create truly affordable housing without the attendant luxury development, remain both the best solution and the one deemed politically impossible. Public housing has never been popular with those in power in this country, and it became even less so after the racialized backlash against civil rights and urban areas that helped dismantle the system. “Since then,” Lasner said, “we’ve been struggling with trying to invent all kinds of ways to work around doing what we really need to do.” Even with de Blasio's progressive tweaks, inclusionary zoning doesn't go far enough.

Westin agreed that the housing fight is bigger than in-



**Standing up by sitting down:** Westin, Bertha Lewis (former head of ACORN), and NYCC members protest the East New York rezoning plan.



**“The big people have the money, but they can't do anything without us.”**

—Rachel Rivera

clusionary zoning: “I think it starts with the crash of 2008, and the fact that Wall Street had speculated so much on neighborhoods all over the country.” For him, the question is how to challenge the power of Wall Street and the real-estate industry and use some of their capital to pay for affordable housing—whether through inclusionary zoning, principal reduction on home loans artificially inflated by speculation, or some other means of taking back wealth extracted from poor and working-class communities.

But winning the fight on affordable housing goes beyond deciding on a plan; it also means deciding which tactics will work. Large protests and civil disobedience are a good first step, but can they stop a policy that politicians and developers really want? The answer, with inclusionary zoning, seems to be no. NYCC faced criticism simply for daring to demand more of a progressive mayor—and then for backing the plan once it became inevitable.

It's also hard to create a national movement that can bring pressure on local officials when the issue is housing rather than wages. As Lasner pointed out, because of its size and density, New York is largely an outlier among US cities, most of which don't have the same kinds of housing needs. That means New York activists are on their own, up against some of the richest people in the world, who look at their neighborhoods and see dollar signs.

For NYCC, this is where the lessons of the Fight for \$15 don't translate. The workplace, as someone named Marx once noted, is uniquely suited for class struggle: Workers refusing to work can bring the entire enterprise to a halt. One of the challenges for those organizing for affordable housing is to find a similar tactic. Rent strikes have a long history, as does squatting. But what can East

New Yorkers do to force anyone to build housing they can afford? As NYCC continues to fight for a city that working-class people of color can live in, it will need new ways to put pressure on officials and developers. (One possible start: a new NYCC campaign, the Real Gentrifiers, which uses tactics similar to those of the Hedge Clippers to bring direct action to the doorsteps of the wealthy developers making money from “affordable housing.”)

The lesson that might apply, from both the Fight for \$15 and the Hedge Clippers, is that when you begin to tackle power at its source and make big, ambitious demands, you can shift the debate on a more fundamental level. “Remember that the little people are the backbone to the city,” said Rachel Rivera. “The big people have the money, but they can't do anything without us.” ■



# TEACH FOR AMERICA GOES GLOBAL

*A controversial model  
for education "reform"  
comes to India.*





by **GEORGE JOSEPH**

**A**LISA CURRIMJEE, A SECOND-YEAR TEACH FOR INDIA FELLOW, IS STRUGGLING in the classroom today. She points down the hall toward her pupils and grimaces: "They haven't been very well-behaved." As she enters the classroom, I wait outside with Hemangi Joshi, a teacher-training expert. We cringe as Currimjee yells until her voice is hoarse, shouting at a classroom of 34 boys sitting two to a desk, with barely any room to move. It's hot, and so it's hard to hear Currimjee over the fans. "What does 'analyze' mean?" she demands, as kids in the back rows doze off right in front of us. She looks frustrated, calling on student after student, until one of them recites the definition he has scribbled in his notebook. Joshi whispers to me, "She is the only one talking, explaining... and she's just sticking to the textbook. This is not much different from rote memorization."

Currimjee is a Teach for India fellow from Mauritius, an island closer to Madagascar than India. She doesn't speak Marathi, her students' native language. This forces her to bellow in her clearest, most basic English, in the hope that her volume will help words like "represent" and "interpret" make more sense. She tells us that she received five weeks of training from Teach for India, a sister organization of the troubled Teach for America, which places the graduates of elite colleges into low-income classrooms as teachers.

TFI, according to its official account, sprang to life after Shaheen Mistri, a prominent nonprofit leader in Mumbai, walked into the Manhattan office of Teach for America founder Wendy Kopp in 2007 and declared, "We have to start Teach for India, and I need your help!" Teach for America has become famous for tackling inequality in education by training young graduates from elite schools to teach in public schools for two years and then become advocates for "education reform"—a contested agenda that includes increasing the number of privately operated charter schools and limiting the power of teachers' unions. TFA's critics say that inexperienced teachers make educational inequality worse, and that the organization has become a Trojan horse for the private takeover of public-sector resources. And TFA's recruiting numbers have dropped in recent years, as skepticism of the once-lauded organization grows.

In India, meanwhile, the education system is rife with problems even more daunting than in the United States. In 1966, during the country's post-partition development period, the Kothari Commission declared that India needed to spend at least 6 percent of its GDP on education. Like most South Asian countries, it failed to come close to this figure. In recent years, despite India's incredible economic growth, the most it has ever spent on education was 4.4 percent of its GDP, in 2000.

The results have been predictably appalling. According to the Right to Education Forum, in the 2013–14 school year, India had 568,000 teaching positions vacant, and

only 22 percent of working teachers had ever received in-service training. This massive shortage means that as of 2015, more than half of Indian public schools were unable to comply with the 2009 Right to Education Act's mandatory class-size ratios (no more than 30 students to one teacher in elementary schools and 35 in secondary schools). Further, a whopping 91,018 Indian public schools function with just one teacher. Also, more than 50 percent of Indian public schools lack handwashing facilities; 15 percent lack girls' toilets; and nearly 25 percent don't have libraries. As in many developing countries, these failures fuel the problem of teacher absenteeism in India.

Like TFA founder Kopp, a Princeton graduate who realized that a career in finance was not for her, Mistri began her forays into educational reform from the outside looking in. Every bit the "global citizen," Mistri describes her privileged upbringing, including traveling first class from "sandy coves on Greek islands" to "the Austrian countryside," in her book on TFI's founding. After a year at Tufts University, she experienced her epiphany while sitting in a taxicab on a family vacation in Mumbai. "Three children ran up to my window, smiling and begging, and in that moment I had a flash of introspection," Mistri writes. "I suddenly knew that my life would have more meaning if I stayed in India. I saw potential in that fleeting moment—in the children at my open window and in myself."

From that point on, Mistri dedicated herself to India. She raised funds from friends of her father, a Citibank executive, and built an educational nonprofit, Akanksha, that she modeled on charter schools in the West (where "a nonprofit could adopt and run a government school with a high degree of independence, using government resources, while being held to rigorous academic standards"). "The toughest part of educating India's children would not be teaching," Mistri continues, "it would be changing the mindsets of the people who believed these children could not succeed."

Fifteen years later, she wanted to do something bigger, and Teach for India seemed like the perfect way to get there. So Mistri took Kopp and Anu Aga, the former chairwoman of the energy and engineering firm Thermax and Kopp's longtime financier, on a tour of Mumbai. She introduced them to corporate leaders and students at elite colleges, and showed them classrooms in government-run schools "without learning." During the trip, Mistri recalls, they passed an old man whose feet "had open wounds." A few minutes later, Aga decided to commit five crore (over



**Shaheen Mistri,**  
the founder of  
Teach for India.



\$740,000) to Teach for India. Mistri was stunned: "I remember what that meant to me—that only in a place of such inequity could there be such generosity."

Having secured some initial finances and Kopp's blessing, Mistri and Aga began to hash out a plan, spending an arduous three months at the Mumbai office of the high-powered consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Despite this intensive work, however, the blueprint they came up with was almost identical to Teach for America's: Teach for India would recruit elite students, train them for five weeks, and then send them out to teach the urban poor.

Two years after her first meeting with Kopp, Mistri sent out the organization's first batch of 87 fellows in Mumbai and Pune. Since then, Teach for India has spread to Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Ahmedabad, and Bangalore, with over 1,000 fellows teaching approximately 40,000 students. According to its annual report, TFI spent over \$6.3 million from 2014 to '15.

Since 2007, adaptations of Teach for America's controversial model have been implemented in 40 countries, on every continent except Antarctica, thanks to Kopp's Teach for All network. Though the organizations are financed through varying mixes of corporate, foundation, and state funding, there's a remarkable continuity in the network's so-called "Theory of Change," regardless of national differences in teacher training, student enrollment, and infrastructure quality. Given the burgeoning presence of Teach for India in the nation's troubled school system, the project of exporting the Teach for America model is being put to a high-profile test. If deemed successful, this model will be poised to deliver large portions of India's education system—and, indeed, others all over the world—into the control of the private sector on a for-profit basis.

**M**EGHNA RAKSHIT, NOW TEACH FOR INDIA'S director of communications, believes deeply in the "Theory of Change." I've arranged to meet her at TFI's Mumbai headquarters, housed in the Godrej Corporation's campus—a world away from the municipal and low-income private schools in which its fellows teach. When I pass through the enormous glass doors, I'm met by friendly receptionists, whose smiles contrast with the frowns of the armed security guards in black military-style uniforms. Shortly, I'm led up an enormous escalator. A guard snaps at me, "No pictures!" I can't help but gape at the shiny white floors, walls of glass, and manicured gardens—sights that I have never seen in my years traversing India.

After about five minutes, Rakshit strides over from the other side of the grand atrium, a confident figure in Western fusion clothing. We shake hands, and she fires back answers to my questions in polished English—a PowerPoint presentation in the flesh.

"Oftentimes, you blame the system," Rakshit says, when I ask her about the inadequate state of India's education system. "But our core belief is that it's the people who are putting the system together—that's

the problem. Underlying all these issues is a lack of leadership. It's not a systemic problem; it's a problem of people."

In Rakshit's view, problems like poverty and underfunded schools reinforce an invidious belief that poor children can't match the educational achievements of their wealthier peers. Teach for All organizations challenge this notion by deploying "transformational" teaching fellows, who will gain "valuable understanding of the challenges facing the underserved populations" and go on to "provide political leadership aimed at devoting more resources to solving the problem of educational inequity."

"If you say it requires a group of smart, dedicated, committed people, it becomes easy," Rakshit beams at me in conclusion. "Or, well, not easy—but possible!"

**"A high-quality teacher can do more to change a student's life than fans and desks."**

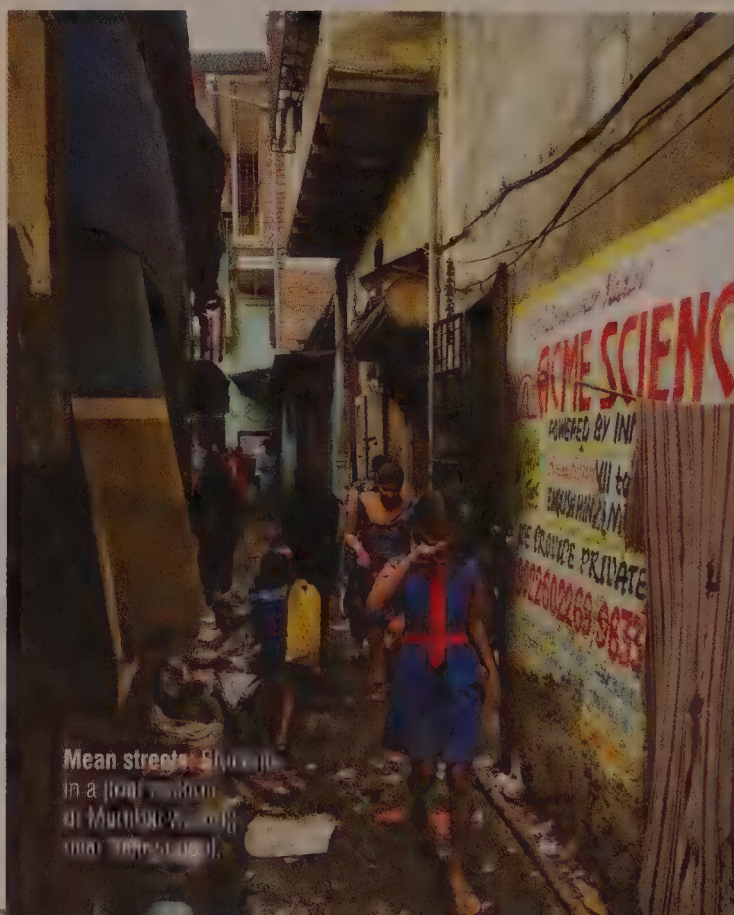
—Khadija S. Bakhtiar, former Teach for Pakistan CEO

**"Y**OUR CLASSROOMS MAY BE HOT AND lack electricity, and you may not have enough desks or books, but we know that a high-quality teacher can do more to change a student's life than fans and desks," declared former Teach for Pakistan CEO Khadija S. Bakhtiar, in an address to the organization's incoming class of 2013 fellows. "Be the teacher and leave your students independent, empowered, and inquisitive."

It is this sort of promise that makes Teach for All so enticing to sponsors like the World Bank, which have long pushed developing countries to slash and privatize their public health-care and education systems. As Chaitra Murlidhar, a Thermax corporate social-responsibility representative (and former TFI fellow), explained in a phone call: "We don't think it would be fair to ask companies to pay higher taxes for education. The problem is not one of funding, but how that funding is spent."

By promising innovative classroom techniques and inspirational leadership, the Teach for All model seeks to transform tremendous material deficits into a problem of character. For the purpose of comparison, I visited a public school in the same area untouched by Teach for India's embrace. In Ms. D's second-grade classroom, the effects of the cuts in education spending by Prime Minister Narendra Modi (a close friend of Teach for India's corporate patrons) and the failure of the Indian state to properly develop a public-school system were immediately noticeable, even in India's financial capital.

Ms. D is every bit as young and energetic as the Teach for India fellows who teach in the same building, but her class is very different. She is most definitely not a "global citizen": She wears a traditional *salwar kameez*, speaks English in a thick Indian accent (the kind that would probably preclude her from being accepted by Teach for India), and occasionally swats her students—a common class-



Mean streets: Slums in a poor neighborhood in Mumbai.



room practice that TFI fellows often cited when discussing the allegedly brutal public-sector “culture” they were fighting to transform.

On this day, Ms. D’s class has 22 desks and 36 students—about the same as the Teach for India classroom down the hall. But unlike the TFI fellows, she has never had a “coteacher” or “parateacher” to help with this load. The class size, Ms. D readily tells me, is clearly in violation of the Right to Education Act—but she goes on, attempting to do right by her students.

“There are 40 students normally. If I had any more, even this would be impossible,” she says. Her only assistance comes from a student who helps pass out papers. When I ask her what her biggest classroom problems are, Ms. D responds simply, “I wish I had more enrichment materials for English activities.... We really need more materials in general,” she adds, nodding at the sparsely equipped classroom.

Given this lack of assistance, Ms. D teaches her students in eight-minute stints, leaving them to practice lessons with each other as she hunches over her desk, furiously completing the paperwork necessary to get the state-provided amenities to which the students are entitled. Judging by the labor she was expected to do alone, Ms. D isn’t only a teacher; she is also a janitor and a clerical worker. Perhaps when Mistri wrote about showing Kopp classrooms in India where “no learning” was happening, what she saw was really something like this: a teacher struggling to do three jobs all by herself.

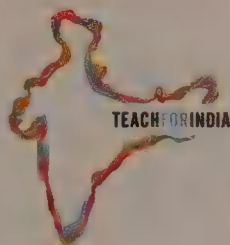
Then again, given the way Mumbai prioritizes public education, Ms. D’s students are lucky to even have schools to attend. For years, the city government has failed to comply with the Right to Education Act, depriving thousands of children access to education by failing to build schools to serve them up to eighth grade. This lack of educational access is common knowledge in Mumbai, where middle-school-age kids can be seen serving tea or shining shoes at street stands every day. During my visit, Mumbai’s municipal trade union was locked in a legal battle with the city corporation over building enough schools and hiring enough teachers to provide up to an eighth-grade education for some 107,000 students.

“The actual violation they are alleging is that the [Right to Education Act] is supposed to guarantee education to all children up to the age of 14,” explains Vivek Vellanki, a former TFI fellow and now a graduate student at Michigan State. “However, government schools have been stratified into primary, upper primary, and secondary schools. In Maharashtra, a disproportionate number of schools run from first to fourth grade or fifth to seventh grade. A student, after completing the highest grade in the school, is given a school leaving certificate, but doesn’t necessarily have another school to go to in the neighborhood.”

As many scholars have pointed out, Mumbai’s refusal to bolster its public-school system disproportionately affects the poorest of the poor, who can’t afford private school and so require strong public institutions willing to serve them regardless of caste or religious background. Anand Teltumbde, writing in *Economic & Political Weekly*, observes that Mumbai, the so-called “first city of India,” accounts for “more than 33 percent of the nation’s



**Corporate oasis:** Teach for India’s offices are located far from the slums that the organization claims to serve.



**Teach for India’s Ashish Dhawan explains that education reform will allow the corporate sector to “unlock the true potential” of India’s human capital.**

tax collection and [has] the highest per capita income of Rs 65,361 in the country, more than twice the country’s average of Rs 29,3982, [and yet] has more than four million people earning less than Rs 20 a day. It is these people mainly belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, Other Backward Classes [an official term for those who are seriously disadvantaged educationally and socially], Muslims and Christians who send their children to BMC [public] schools.”

**T**EACH FOR INDIA’S BOARD MEMBERS ARE involved in efforts to increase the privatization of India’s schools instead of securing more funding and resources for teachers like Ms. D. Take Ashish Dhawan, a TFI board member and one of the most successful private-equity players in the country today. Dhawan’s name isn’t as famous as those of TFI’s other board members, several of whom come from India’s dynastic industrial families. But over the last five years, Dhawan has become one of the country’s youngest big-time philanthropists, funding numerous education-reform groups that draw on the language of the so-called liberalization era of the 1990s, when the government privatized former state industries, welcomed foreign investment, and began to abandon its historically progressive role in economic development.

In interviews, Dhawan explains that education reform will allow the corporate sector to “unlock the true potential” of India’s human capital. Informed by his success during the country’s IT/outsourcing boom, Dhawan claims that the Indian government needs to shift its focus from “inputs” like infrastructure and classroom size and turn its attention to producing higher “outputs.” To do this, he has advocated the increased use of standardized tests, the introduction of cheaper forms of instruction like MOOCs (massive online open courses), and increased private-sector participation in Indian education, freed from teacher-licensing and class-size regulations.

Dhawan currently sits on the board of education com-



mittee of virtually every pro-privatization “reform” group in India, from non-profits like Akanksha to advocacy organizations like the India School Leadership Institute, the libertarian Centre for Civil Society, and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. For years, these groups have waged public campaigns to promote the privatization of the education sector, from public-private partnerships (PPPs) to full-blown voucher schemes for private schools.

But Dhawan has done more than just advocate. In 2012, he created a PPP framework with consultants from McKinsey and then pitched it to Mumbai city officials. “They finally accepted it, signed it and it was eventually passed by the house,” Dhawan recalled in an interview with *Livemint*. “That’s an example of being active on the ground to show that something is working and then to translate it to actual policy.” Following Dhawan’s plan, Mumbai opened up 1,174 government schools to private operators, offering them the opportunity to do everything from provide specific school services to run schools entirely with their own privately hired (and often inexperienced and nonunionized) teachers.

The drastic move, which was decided without any popular referendum, generated controversy in the city’s public sector, particularly with teachers’ unions and progressive parties. Despite protests by thousands of people in 2012 and 2013, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation adopted the privatization proposal in January 2013, fueling concerns that similar efforts will now be under way across the country. Since the successful Mumbai takeover, Dhawan’s Central Square Foundation has created the Education Alliance, a coalition whose express purpose is to “facilitate public-private partnerships” nationwide. The alliance enjoys support from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and Absolute Return for Kids and is already working with policy-makers in South Delhi, Chennai, and Mahdya Pradesh to develop PPP frameworks similar to the one adopted in Mumbai. And according to Dhawan, Indian states, including Gujarat, Punjab, and Rajasthan, are looking into such partnerships.

Geetha Nambissan, a professor of sociology in education at Jawaharlal Nehru University, calls these PPPs “a ‘creeping’ form of privatisation where private organisations are given easy access to public institutions and resources while not subjecting them to public scrutiny.”

Thus, while Teach for India often describes its mission as “the second freedom struggle,” its actions and supporters seem more in line with Prime Minister Modi’s promise for a second economic liberalization. Modi’s right-wing

BJP party recently pushed through a drastic 22 percent cut to the central government’s elementary-education program, a 28.7 percent cut to its secondary-education program, and even a 16.4 percent cut to India’s landmark school-lunch program. Despite these brutal reductions, Teach for India-affiliated groups like the Central Square Foundation and the Centre for Civil Society have hailed Modi’s education policies, satisfied with his willingness to slash regulations on private-school operators and focus on “student-learning outcomes,” presumably instead of “inputs” like bathrooms and running water.

Some teachers are trying to resist the relentless expansion of Teach for India and the education-reform movement in general, but their public mobilizations have been few and far between. “We are trying to push them off and we are trying very hard, but they have very powerful people behind them,” notes Firoz Ahmad, a primary-school teacher in Delhi. “For the last few years, we have been hearing about ‘vocational information.’ We are quite afraid they are going to use early screening and labeling to screen [students] into vocational courses... purely *economic* schooling. This is not just Modi, but they are obviously more aggressive. And this not just in India.”

It is unclear how much students will benefit from this handoff to the private sector, but the Teach for India program certainly strives to enhance its recruits’ future prospects beyond their brief careers in the classroom. To this end, TFI fellows are taught to act more like classroom managers than traditional teachers, learning skills applicable for their expected future positions in government and the corporate world.

Most TFI classrooms had boards up on which the students’ “misbehavior” could be publicly tallied; high-performing students were offered gold stars, which they could then exchange for prizes. Similarly, many of the TFI fellows I observed in Mumbai had dire “consequence plans” on display at the front of their classrooms, detailing the various potential “crimes” and escalating “punishments” that the students would face. Alongside these were other signs that attempted to encourage a more work-oriented culture, as in many American charter schools, with messages like “Work Hard Together,” “Grit,” and “Sit in Your Own Place, Move if Asked.”

Talking to TFI fellows, it became clear that this top-down “Theory of Change” is a necessary consequence of the two-year fellowship structure. After observing classes all day at a school in the Mumbai neighborhood of Goreagon, I asked the three TFI fellows there, Selna, Nikhil, and Priya, how much they worked with the surrounding community to push for better school conditions long-term. “The community-engagement thing is tricky,” Selna replied. “Those [policy] decisions are made at the top anyway,” Priya added. “So what is the point of community engagement? People in the community see us as outsiders or volunteers. It’s like, ‘Why should I listen to you?’”

I pressed this point, asking if this was perhaps why Teach for India fellows should live in these neighborhoods and stick with the schools for more than a couple years. But all three shook their heads.

“It wouldn’t be marketable if it were longer,” Nikhil said.

**People in the community see us as outsiders or volunteers. It’s like, ‘Why should I listen to you?’**

—Priya, a TFI fellow

**“Theory of Change”:**  
A frustrated TFI fellow struggles with students who lack desks or resources.





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**MAKE A GIFT TO *THE NATION* THROUGH YOUR WILL.**

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**T**HE *NATION* has been going strong for 150 years, an embarrassing portion of which I have witnessed firsthand. I hesitate to confess the exact number of years, but I am proud to admit that I have left a gift to *The Nation* in my will.

It was an easy decision to make, and not difficult to arrange. I encourage you to join my wife, Annie, and me in doing the same. Please consider leaving a gift to *The Nation* in your will or through your retirement plan.

You don't need me to tell you that the independent, unfettered voice of *The Nation* remains as necessary as ever, but I will anyway. Help us keep it that way. Help ensure a home for dissent and dissenters who will challenge the conventional wisdoms of the future, as they envision the world we truly want our grandchildren to inherit.

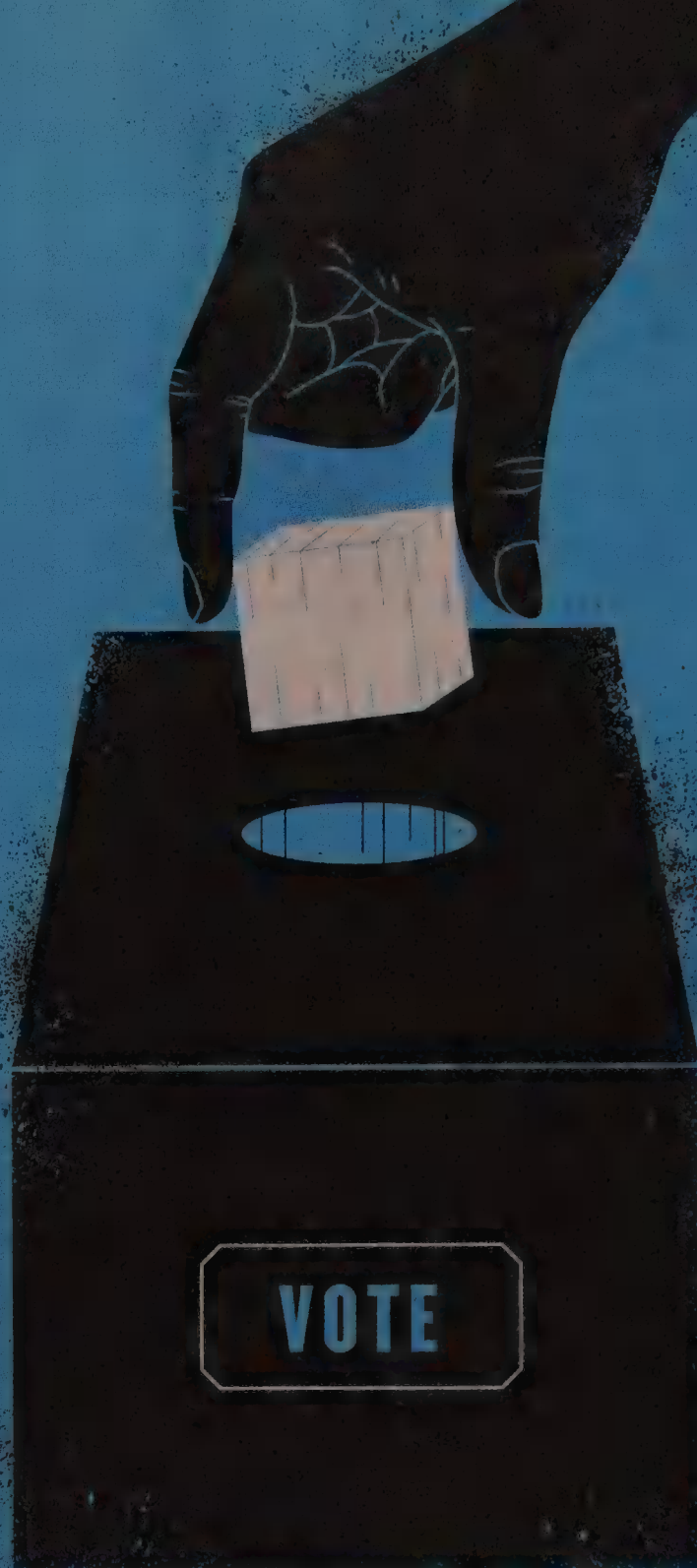
—Victor Navasky

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# *A Tale of Two States*

*The voting rights, ID laws, and other issues that have shaped the difference between Republicans and Democrats in the state*

by ARI DERMAN

**O**N APRIL 5, THE DAY OF WISCONSIN'S PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY, Anita Johnson picked up Dennis Hatten at his new apartment in West Milwaukee and took him to the polls. "We're going to complete your journey and make sure you vote today," Johnson told him.

Simply being able to vote in Wisconsin was no small feat for Hatten, a 53-year-old former Marine. He'd met Johnson, a 70-year-old Wisconsin coordinator for VoteRiders, in August 2015, as the country celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. Hatten was living in temporary housing for homeless veterans across the street from Milwaukee's VA hospital. Wisconsin's strict new voter-ID law would be going into effect in 2016, and Johnson was part of the effort to help



300,000 registered voters without an acceptable government-issued ID obtain one—9 percent of the electorate.

Hatten had relocated to Wisconsin from Illinois in 2013. His Illinois driver's license and veterans' ID card were not accepted as valid voter IDs in Wisconsin, so he asked Johnson for assistance getting a photo-ID card from the state Department of Motor Vehicles. "I grew up in the 1960s in the segregated South, and I remember what my parents and grandparents had to go through to vote," Hatten says. "As soon as I became of age to vote, I voted in every election and urged others to vote, too."

It took Johnson six months to get Hatten a state photo ID because, like many African Americans born in the Jim Crow South, he didn't have a birth certificate, and the DMV rejected his initial application. He took his new ID to the polls, but the address on it didn't match his new address, which the poll workers needed to register him at the site (Wisconsin is one of 14 states with Election Day registration). While Hatten conferred with the poll worker, another man who tried to register with his veterans' ID was turned away.

After a lengthy conversation with election officials, Hatten went back to his apartment and retrieved a utility bill with his new address. After waiting patiently in line while Johnson looked on nervously, he was finally able to cast a ballot. "I've never had any problems voting until I came to Wisconsin," Hatten said, holding up his "I Voted" sticker. "If someone didn't know the law like I did, they would've walked away from the voting booth."

In fact, many Wisconsinites who didn't have Johnson's help or Hatten's perseverance were blocked from the polls. Their experiences offered a striking rejoinder to Governor Scott Walker's contention that the state's voter-ID law "works just fine." Eddie Lee Holloway Jr., a 58-year-old African American who had moved from Illinois to Milwaukee, brought his expired Illinois photo ID, birth certificate, and Social Security card to get a photo ID for voting, but the DMV rejected his application because his birth certificate read "Eddie Junior Holloway," the result of a clerical error. Holloway spent \$200 on a bus ticket to Illinois to try to amend his birth certificate and made seven trips to government agencies in two different states, but he still couldn't vote in the Wisconsin primary. To date, the state's DMV has rejected nearly a fifth of all applicants for a voter ID, 85 percent of whom were African American, Latino, or Native American.

"This is the worst election I've ever seen in Wisconsin," said Johnson, who's lived in Milwaukee her whole life. "I go to bed thinking we've settled something, and I wake up and there's something else."

In addition to the voter-ID law, since 2011, Wisconsin's GOP-controlled legislature has cut the early-voting window from 30 days to 12, eliminated night and weekend voting, banned straight-ticket voting, made it more difficult both to register to vote and to cast an absentee ballot, and tightened residency requirements. It has also disbanded the widely respected nonpartisan agency that oversees state elections and was supposed to educate the public about the voter-ID law. University of Wisconsin political scientist Barry Burden calls it "death by a thousand cuts."

Many GOP-controlled states have restricted access to the ballot following Barack Obama's election, but Wisconsin is especially notable because, unlike Alabama or Texas, it has a long history of high voter turnout, pioneering election reforms, and commitment to good governance.

Indeed, in 2008 and 2012, Wisconsin trailed only one

state—Minnesota—in voter turnout. The two states are practically twins, with nearly identical demographics, geography, and cultural history. Both states have a long-standing progressive tradition dating back more than a century, from Wisconsin Governor Robert "Fighting Bob" La Follette to Minnesota's Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party. In the 1970s, they were also the first states to allow Election Day registration, which has significantly boosted turnout. "Demographers call it the 'civic-responsibility belt,'" says Craig Gilbert, Washington bureau chief of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

But the two states have clashed sharply in recent years, becoming case studies in the difference between Democratic and Republican rule. Whereas Wisconsin elected Walker and a GOP legislature in 2010, Minnesota narrowly elected Mark Dayton, and two years later a Democratic legislature. Minnesota raised taxes on the wealthy, invested in public education, expanded healthcare, and boosted unions, while Wisconsin did the opposite. Now Minnesota is winning the border war, with faster job growth, higher wages, and lower unemployment.

Nowhere is this difference starker than in the states' approaches to voting. In contrast to Wisconsin, Minnesota defeated a high-profile voter-ID ballot initiative in 2012; recently passed legislation switching from a caucus system to a presidential primary, which is more inclusive; and is considering new reforms, such as restoring voting rights to 47,000 people on probation or parole. "Wisconsin is heading toward Alabama and Mississippi status," says Jay Heck, executive director of Common Cause Wisconsin, "while Minnesota is leading the nation on expanding voting rights."

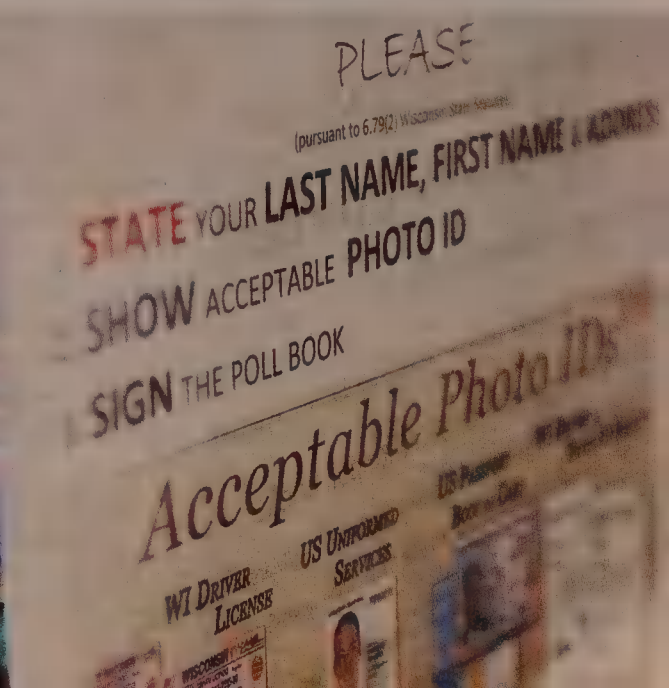
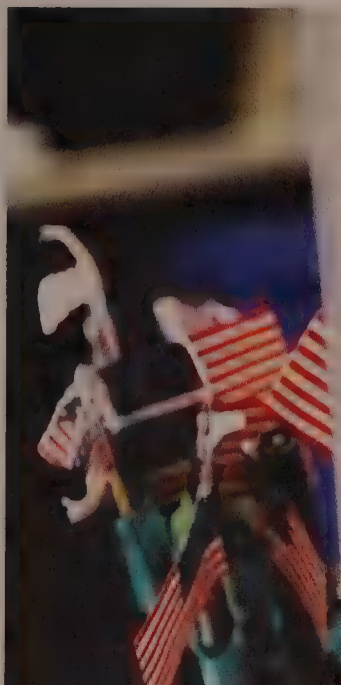
The divide illustrates how the United States is fast becoming a two-tiered democracy, a country where it's harder to vote in Republican-controlled states and easier to vote in Democratic ones. There are some notable exceptions—New York, a blue state, ranked 47th in the Pew Charitable Trust's 2012 Elections Performance Index, while North Dakota, a red state, ranked No. 1—but the trend is unmistakable. Of the 22 states that have passed new voting restrictions since 2010, more than 80 percent were under Republican control, while the states, such as Oregon and California, that have recently passed ambi-



**“This is the worst election I’ve ever seen in Wisconsin.”**

—Anita Johnson, 70

**Suppression at work:** Instructions for “acceptable photo ID,” Eau Claire, Wisconsin.





tious reforms like automatic voter registration are overwhelmingly Democratic.

With the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the country committed itself to ensuring voting rights for all Americans, regardless of race, party, or region. Now this consensus has been shattered, with ruthless partisanship undermining the most basic of democratic rights.

**T**ODD ALLBAUGH BECAME A REPUBLICAN IN 1980, WHEN HE WAS in the fifth grade, after meeting his local GOP chairman. He still has a Ronald Reagan poster with the slogan “Let’s Make America Great Again.” Allbaugh worked for Representative Steve Gunderson, the first openly gay Republican in Congress, and then became chief of staff for State Senator Dale Schultz, whom the *Madison Capital Times* called “the last remaining moderate Republican in the state legislature.”

“In the 1980s and ’90s, when I went to Republican conventions, I heard about the need to create a bigger tent, to bring new people into the party,” Allbaugh says. Republicans controlled the state government during much of that time but never passed laws limiting the ability to vote.

He received a rude awakening when he attended a closed-door meeting of the State Senate’s Republican caucus in 2011. It was considering the new voter-ID bill, a top priority for Wisconsin Republicans since the 2000 and ’04 presidential elections, which the GOP lost by less than 1 percent. The party blamed the losses (without evidence) on voter fraud by Democrats in Milwaukee, along with a high turnout among black and young voters.

“We’ve got to think about what this could mean for the neighborhoods around Milwaukee and the college campuses around the state,” said State Senator Mary Lazich. Seventy percent of Wisconsin’s black population, which voted for Obama over Mitt Romney 94 to 6 percent, lives in Milwaukee, while 18- to 24-year-olds favored Obama over Romney by 26 points.

Schultz asked his colleagues to consider not whether the bill would help the GOP, but how it would impact the voting rights of Wisconsinites. Then-State Senator Glenn Grothman cut him off: “What I’m concerned about is winning. We better get this done while we have the opportunity.” (When asked during the state’s April 5 primary why Republicans would carry Wisconsin in 2016, Grothman, who had since been elected to the US Congress, replied: “Now we have photo ID.”) In a federal voting-rights case, Allbaugh named two other GOP senators who were “giddy” and “politically frothing at the mouth” over the bill.

“It made me physically ill,” Allbaugh says. “It was like a gut punch. I never thought, after all the years of dedicating my life to helping advance the Republican Party, that I would sit in a meeting of Republican officials and hear them openly plotting to impede another citizen’s voting rights.”

Schultz voted for the bill reluctantly, but his concern grew when Republicans passed another law in 2014 eliminating early voting at night and on weekends; some 250,000 Wisconsinites had voted early in 2012, favoring Obama over Romney by 58 to 41 percent.

Grothman, the author of the bill, said he wanted to “nip” early voting “in the bud” before it spread from Democratic strongholds like Madison and Milwaukee. The county clerk of Waukesha

County, a Milwaukee suburb that is 95 percent white and staunchly conservative, insisted that early voting gave “too much access” to voters in Milwaukee and Madison.

Schultz asked Allbaugh to find three documented cases of voter fraud in the state. But Allbaugh could only find two instances of double voting—both, ironically, committed by Republicans. Neither case would have been stopped by a voter-ID law or was related to early voting.

Schultz sharply criticized his party’s voting restrictions before retiring from the legislature in 2014. “We should be pitching, as political parties, our ideas for improving things in the future rather than mucking around in the mechanics and making it more confrontational at our voting sites and trying to suppress the vote,” he said. Allbaugh quit politics and opened a coffee shop in Madison. He decided to go public when a young employee from California couldn’t vote in Wisconsin’s primary because his California driver’s license wasn’t an acceptable form of voter ID and his birth certificate was in California.

The GOP’s past support for voting rights can be exaggerated—only two Republicans in the state legislature voted for Election Day registration in 1975, for example—but it’s also a key part of Wisconsin’s progressive history. In the early 1900s, Governor La Follette supported women’s suffrage and the direct election of presidential nominees, rather than their selection by party bosses. More recently, GOP Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner led the effort to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act in 2006; he’s one of the few Republicans working to restore the law after the Supreme Court gutted it in 2013. “I would rather lose my job than suppress votes to keep it,” Sensenbrenner wrote in *The New York Times* in March.

Only 14 congressional Republicans have cosponsored Sensenbrenner’s Voting Rights Amendment Act. The aggressive gerrymandering in Wisconsin helps explain the party’s increasingly radical conservatism. Unlike in Minnesota, where a court drew a map fair to both parties because of divided government, Republicans controlled Wisconsin’s redistricting process for the first time in 50 years and, in 2010, cunningly manipulated boundaries to maintain their power for the next decade and beyond. In 2012, Obama carried the state by seven points, yet Republicans won more than half of Wisconsin’s House, State Senate, and State Assembly districts. Just 10 percent of legislative seats are now considered competitive, giving the GOP a seemingly airtight majority.



**“I would rather lose my job than suppress votes to keep it.”**

—Jim Sensenbrenner, GOP congressman from Wisconsin

**No small feat:** Dennis Hatten holding up his “I Voted” sticker in Milwaukee.



**I**N THE SPRING OF 2011, MINNESOTA’S Republican-controlled legislature passed a strict voter-ID bill much like Wisconsin’s. Governor Dayton, who noted that his predecessors had refused to sign any election-law changes that didn’t have bipartisan support, vetoed it. Republicans responded by putting a constitutional amendment requiring photo ID on the 2012 ballot.

Initial polling showed that 80 percent of Minnesotans supported the law, including 64 percent of Democrats. “I would say [80 percent] is probably as close to certainty as you may hope to get in regards to the passage of a constitutional amend-



ment," said the bill's author, Representative Mary Kiffmeyer.

Dan McGrath, executive director of TakeAction Minnesota, was given the unenviable task of defeating the ballot initiative. McGrath grew up in Wausau, Wisconsin, before moving to the Twin Cities for college, and he knew that Minnesota was perilously close to emulating Walker's Wisconsin. "Nearly everyone in the state believed a photo ID was the most common-sense solution to the problem of voter fraud," McGrath says. "We needed to reframe the issue. We decided to never say the word 'fraud'; instead we would only talk about the cost, complications, and consequences of the amendment."

Eighty groups representing 1 million members, from the AARP to the AFL-CIO to the League of Women Voters, formed a massive coalition—Our Vote, Our Future—to defeat the amendment. They highlighted the stories of the 250,000 voters who could be disenfranchised by the law: not just young people and minorities, but also seniors and members of the military. One TV ad featured a young Iraq War vet, Alex Erickson, saying: "The voter-restriction amendment might seem like a good idea, but when the legislature put it on the ballot, they screwed it up. To them, military IDs aren't valid IDs. Which means that this amendment takes away a basic freedom from those who gave a whole lot."

The coalition also stressed how the law would cost up to \$40 million, endanger the state's very popular Election Day registration system, and make it harder for rural voters to cast a ballot—arguments that appealed to independents and moderates.

One defining TV spot featured Dayton and former governor Arne Carlson, a Republican, standing in front of the state capitol. "This voter-restriction amendment is way too costly," Carlson said. "And it will keep thousands of seniors from voting," Dayton added. "If you're a Democrat, Republican, or independent, please vote no—this is not good for Minnesota," Carlson said in closing. Such an ad would be inconceivable in Wisconsin.

In addition to the voter-ID amendment, Republicans put an amendment on the ballot to ban same-sex marriage, which rallied progressive voters against both initiatives under the slogan "Minnesota Nice: Vote No Twice." "At every marriage-equality rally, we talked about voting," recalls Democratic Congressman Keith Ellison. "At every voting rally, we talked about marriage equality."

Our Vote, Our Future contacted more than 400,000 people about the amendment

and changed the minds of nearly 1 million voters—an incredible organizing feat. On Election Day, 54 percent of Minnesotans opposed the voter-ID amendment, a wider margin than the one for Obama or against the same-sex marriage ban. It was the first time that a voter-ID law had been defeated at the ballot box.

There wasn't one single reason why the amendment was defeated, but the general consensus was that making it harder to vote would imperil all of the qualities that had long made Minnesota, like Wisconsin in the days before Walker, a laboratory for progressive government. "When we treat democracy as its own discrete issue area, we're bound to lose," McGrath says. "When we connect a functioning democracy as an essential means to a greater end—higher wages, racial equality, income equality—that's when it becomes an inspiring fight."

The defeat of the voter-ID amendment ended the voting wars in Minnesota, at least for now. "The debate has been more or less settled here," says Secretary of State Steve Simon. "Having lived through this 2012 upheaval, I'd hope that some people have learned their lesson about rash attacks on the right to vote." The defeat also made it easier to pass progressive policies in many other areas. "There's just no way that Minnesota would have made the advances it has if voter ID had passed," McGrath says. "Expanding public health care, raising the minimum wage, banning the criminal-history box for job applicants, raising taxes in a progressive way—they would not have happened, because the political voice of those people directly impacted would all but have been eliminated. It's hard to overstate the importance of that." Finally, the amendment's resounding defeat offers a road map for combating similar measures in other states, like Missouri. "It's important that people who believe in voting rights know that you can win," Ellison says.

Even so, winning on voting rights will be harder in 2016. This is the first presidential election in 50 years in which voters cannot rely on the full protections of the Voting Rights Act, and 17 states have new restrictions in place for the first time. In our two-tiered democracy, the gulf that separates states like Wisconsin and Minnesota is only getting larger. ■

*Ari Berman, a Nation senior contributing writer, is the author, most recently, of Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America.*



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## Letters

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(continued from page 2)

speaks to more than just how we relate to our environment in the traditional sense. It also sums up how we must relate to our entire situation as citizens of the world. "If we're clear-eyed, [Jedediah] Purdy hopes, we'll come to see that what's left is artificial politics—the politics we make together. Technology and economics can't save us: Both repeat the old fantasy and faith that politics can be avoided." We must tackle all problems facing modern society with these clear eyes—through true collective democracy.

DANIEL WILLIAMS

### Live Long and... Prosper?

Thanks for Jon Baskin's excellent review of Don DeLillo's *Zero K* ["Long Soft Lives," June 6/13]. Baskin writes that "DeLillo risks contributing to the same fatalistic malaise that his novels depict and, by implication at least, decry." When I read *White Noise*, my first DeLillo novel, in the 1980s, it gave me chills for this very reason. I understood the "implication," but thought it was far outweighed by the crushing and ruthless representation of modern despair, dread, and alienation that Baskin so skillfully describes. DeLillo is a fantastically talented writer, but I fear his skill has always been focused in this direction, the direction of hopeless, pointless struggle without hope of redemption. Like the film *Eraserhead*, *White Noise* is a testament to how bleak the vision of human life can go. I hold both works at arm's length, a shudder away; they're unforgettable and true enough, yet detestable as visions of human existence. Both the film and the novel prove beyond a shadow of a doubt

that intelligence and craft are not enough—you also need heart.

TREY CASIMIR

### GOP Humpty Dumpty

"Is the Party System About to Crack Up?" *The Nation* asks in its May 23/30 issue. It's hard to see how the Republican Party can reconstitute itself as a viable mainstream force. However, it did so in the wake of the 1968 election, and the Democrats have also done it following a downturn in their own fortunes. The problem now, of course, is that Republicans have pushed themselves so far to the right that they don't seem to have a coherent, sensible spokesperson left, even though they retain a strong following among the American people.

When they don't seem to care about global warming and environmental catastrophe; when they are solidly against abortion and opposed to gay marriage; and when the gulf between the 1 percent and the middle class is of no concern—how will we get beyond this point, given that the whole idea of compromise is anathema to Republicans? How can American society progress when a Democratic victory is likely to leave the Republican losers feeling ominously oppressed? Will the right be resentful enough to resort to violent revolution? Or will it recover with a new, more reasonable, tolerant, and intelligent agenda? In the past, the left-right divide has been resolved by outside threats that have led to war and brought the parties together. Such conditions, fortunately, don't seem to be on the horizon. So how can those who are diametrically opposed be harmonized? Even with a Democratic victory, I fear for the future.

JOHN SHELLENBERGER  
BOZEMAN, MONT.





PRIVATE COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Shaft Towers; Fordertürme, 1966–79, by Bernd and Hilla Becher.

# 15 Short Texts in Search of Hilla Becher

BY JANA PRIKRYL

**BERND BECHER TRAINED AS A PAINTER AND** illustrator, and first depicted the factories that he and his wife, Hilla, would later photograph in neat and tidy watercolors and lithographs, almost as literal as architects' renderings or, indeed, photographs. Hilla Becher (who died last October at the age of 81) had already

trained and worked as a photographer, and it's as if by joining forces with her in 1959, Bernd simply found a sharper pencil for recording the local landscape. Can it be that the impulses behind the early sketches and the famous photographs were the same—merely to document, as the couple told interviewers again and again, industrial architecture that was then disappearing from the part of Rhineland Germany where Bernd had grown

up? I find myself wondering if his sketches and paintings, pursued for a few decades, might have gone in some unexpected direction, departing from representation entirely.

**IN THAT SCENARIO, WOULD HILLA'S PHOTOGRAPHIC** career also be a surprise? Imagine her as the Louise Bourgeois of photographic expressionism. Obviously not. One of the

*Jana Prikryl's first book of poems, The After Party (Tim Duggan Books), has just been published.*



creations of her and Bernd's artistic partnership was the seemingly perfect fusion of their visions. "No, there is no division of labor," they told an interviewer in 1989, in a conversation that pointedly doesn't designate which of them is speaking. "Outsiders cannot tell who has taken a particular photo and we also often forget ourselves. It simply is not important." In 1968, Hilla had hinted at a more traditional arrangement, saying that she mainly developed and printed the photographs, while Bernd drove "into the Siegen and Ruhr areas and to Belgium on his ancient motorcycle" to take them. And after Bernd's death in 2007, Hilla suggested that she had enabled his indifference to everything but their work. For their big retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in 2004, for example, she "hung the images and thought he'd show up for the opening. But he didn't. He didn't feel like it." Most of the time, they granted no public access to the shared space where they conceived their pictures and agreed to continue, for nearly 50 years, to pursue their one method: making large-scale black-and-white portraits of industrial architecture, sorted into "typologies" and arranged into towering grids of six, nine, 12, 15, or 24 photographs. Theirs was the artistic expression of Stanley Cavell's insight regarding the screwball comedies of remarriage: A successful partnership involves daily reaffirmation of the union, daily agreement that divorce—or some new stylistic departure—is not an option (because divorce, at least, has been for the last hundred years).



**MANY MODERNISTS ASPIRED TO THIS UNSWerving, long-term pursuit of a single style.** The paintings of Fernand Léger, Otto Dix, and Edward Hopper (to take three almost at random) seem to distill the traditional expectation that an artistic calling will produce a recognizable manner, and the even tighter focus of later artists like Agnes Martin and Richard Serra has added to the prestige of the unwavering pursuit of one style. This cult of authenticity explains why it can take decades for artists whose approach is more restless, like Gerhard Richter or Sigmar Polke, to emerge from their local settings (in Richter's case, he was 55 before he had his first small retrospective in the United States); why Philip Guston's midcareer swerve away from his Abstract Expressionist origins is generally felt to be so heroic; or why the recent tributes to David Bowie lingered, repeatedly, on his allergy to repeating himself: It's a way of proceeding that's highly unusual. We talk about young writers finding their "voice" with the assumption that once it is found, it will somehow be

intrinsic (note the contradiction!). The notion of a "late style" is the exception that proves the rule, the singular voice coming under the pressure of mortality. With the Bechers, whose work is so coldly "objective" and formally constant—each photograph of a massive industrial structure taken from the same elevated perspective, showing no human figures, shot only in low-contrast daylight (in Alabama they once waited around for three weeks for the weather to cooperate)—it can seem like the decision to stick to this manner is the real item they were so relentlessly working to photograph and then compare to itself, and photograph and compare to itself, in a lifetime-size grid.



**COMPARISON, OR JUXTAPOSITION, IS THE** dynamic that powers their work. Individually, their photographs of water towers, lime kilns, mine pitheads, and blast furnaces (plus structures not strictly industrial, like workers' houses and factory halls) are colossal and nearly brutal in their centered compositions. But 12 water towers of similar design or typology, arranged in a grid, announce their many points of distinction and thus the local constraints and whims that went into their making. A project that had seemed literal and descriptive becomes almost comic and subversive. "The humor is a very important factor for us," Bernd once said, adding that they hoped to capture the tenacity of local people "who have to come to practical terms with instructions issued from farther up and then give free rein to their fantasy." Seen as part of a grid, each structure's design choice gains a voice of its own and asks questions of all the different choices around it. In the 1990s Hilla said that when the couple had started out, they "considered showing single images" of each structure, but then "there was a particular moment when we placed several cooling towers alongside each other and something happened." Bernd adds: "A kind of music."



**THEY OFTEN MENTIONED A QUARTET OF** photographers who were important to them: August Sander, Eugène Atget, Walker Evans, and Albert Renger-Patzsch. Hilla said that discovering Sander was "a fantastic revelation" because of how "he portrayed people, in the same way that we would portray objects. Sander encouraged them to perform their role." People as objects: From their earliest photographs, the Bechers gravitated toward the most anti-Romantic quadrant of modernist photography (though Evans's inclusion here strikes me as some kind of misunderstanding). Their typologies are

carefully, soberly emptied of any social or political implications. Thomas Struth, one of their most successful students, has noted that when the Bechers formulated their cold aesthetic 60 years ago, its apolitical rigor was precisely what lent it political overtones: Germans "didn't want to look at reality, because what you saw in Germany in the fifties was destruction and the Holocaust. It was all a terrible reality, so precise looking was not a widespread impulse." But this understanding of the Bechers' aesthetic, with the implication that in the 1950s and '60s their photographs represented a reckoning with the past, tends to fall away when you peer at their pictures now in light of their own statements. The Bechers once said, "We want to offer the audience a point of view, or rather a grammar"—note the self-edit toward greater abstraction—in order to "compare the different structures.... To do so, the objects must be isolated from their context and freed from all association." How different this is from Sander's series "The Persecuted," from his *People of the Twentieth Century*, portraying Jews who were, at best, under threat in 1930s Germany. If he "encouraged them to perform their role," it was a deeply social and defiantly individual one; in a sense, it was *all* association. But the Bechers tended to see their heroes as they did their winding towers and blast furnaces: as vessels of formal information, to the exclusion of all else.



**HILLA ONCE SAID THAT HER AIM, EVEN** as an apprentice photographer, had been to capture "silent objects." Bernd was born in 1931 and Hilla in '34, so they were children during the war, a time they rarely if ever discussed on the record. After Bernd's death, Hilla was interviewed by two German journalists, Tobias Haberl and Dominik Wichmann, and told them: "It's true, we both got roughed up a lot by the war. I remember how I thought after the war: God, my parents have such sentimental ideals of landscapes, beauty, music." Without specifying how her family suffered, she suggests that it freed her from older ways of looking: "The idea of a bourgeois life was gone, I didn't take those things that seriously any longer. That way, I was open for an independent way to view things." When Haberl and Wichmann challenge the political detachment of the Bechers' photographs, which they note contain "no Cold War, no student movement, no re-unification," Hilla replies: "That we did on purpose. We always said: We cannot comment. We never took sides during a strike. You can't criticize when you want to photographically conclude some-





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thing.” And yet she adds: “What matters is whether the blast furnace produces hospital beds [or] steel for bombs.” “Were accusations made against you?” the journalists ask. “Of course! We were accused of making something look beautiful that could be used...” They assist: “...to kill people.” “Exactly.”

■

**THE BECHERS ONCE TRIED TO COLLABORATE** with historians—a project that was abandoned because their collaborators intended to “write a text, and garnish their text with our photos,” Bernd recalled in 2002. “They couldn’t imagine that photographs could stand on their own.” And Hilla added: “Working with them, we felt for the first time that we weren’t free.” The most generous interpretation of their refusal to discuss the past (or garnish their photos with texts) is to see it as a formal decision, a theoretical counterpart to the way the images evoke absolute emotional restraint, whether about the photographers’ backgrounds or the objects’ uses. This recalls the lifelong self-erasure of the Japanese painter On Kawara—another late modernist who died quite recently and whose 50-year career of painting nothing but the day’s date, day after day, was married to a reticence about himself that was so total (no interviews, no photographs except from the back, and, like Bernd, routine avoidance of his own openings) that it passes through morbid withdrawal into a kind of sublime expressiveness by dint of its consistency and its departure from common practice. About the same age as the Bechers, On Kawara was a child during Japan’s adventure as an Axis power, a high-school student during the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He later said his wartime experiences made him doubt “everything.” Everything—every grain of narrative information, aside from the abstract placeholder of date—is withheld from his pictures in a negative capability that is similar to the little we know about what we see in the Bechers’ photographs. Could this distrust of making assertions be a response to the trauma of growing up in one of the aggressor nations during World War II? Yet other painters of the same generation (I think again of Richter and Polke) discovered themselves precisely by confronting the historical taboos of German culture in the 1960s.

■

**IF ON KAWARA CARRIED HIS DOUBT TO ITS** ultimate conclusion, emptying his canvases of all but code, the Bechers never lost faith in the plain old that-which-can-be-seen. Their unquenchable attraction to industrial forms

has a real innocence about it. In 2008, Hilla was asked, “But why furnaces and conveyor belts?” She replied: “Because they are honest. They are functional, and they reflect what they do—that is what we liked. A person always is what s/he wants to be, never what s/he is. Even an animal usually plays a role in front of the camera.” Is there not some innocence, too, in the notion that the massive buildings and equipment of any given industry play no rhetorical role in suggesting the power of their masters? When Hilla is asked whether they “never got bored of blast furnaces, not once in forty years?” she replies, “Never. We studied this anonymous architecture, object after object, until we understood the enormous variety of the subject.... We learned how blast furnaces worked, how they were constructed, what parts they had.” It seems they were curious only about the mechanics of each structure, a bit like children learning about fire stations. “And then it was easier to find out whether there was a front and back. At some stage we asked ourselves: Does a blast furnace have a face?” But the next question—if so, wouldn’t a blast furnace also “play a role in front of the camera?”—remains unspoken.

■

**ALTHOUGH HILLA NOTED THAT THEIR** photographs were criticized for aestheticizing instruments of injustice or worse, it’s hard to find examples of such challenges in commentaries on their work. Yet it’s an old argument, endemic both to the style and to certain lush forms of photojournalism. In 1931, Walter Benjamin used it against their hero Renger-Patzsch and the machine-age neutrality of his photos, which Benjamin accused of a “posture...that can endow any soup-can with cosmic significance but cannot grasp a single one of the human connections in which it exists.” Susan Sontag and John Berger wrestled with the ethics of war photography and how it beautifies suffering (though stylistic restraint is hardly one of its hallmarks). As in those cases, it tends to be writers who demand that this upstart documentary medium, photography, find a route to moral worth that parallels the way prose achieves it. Silence, though, can prompt speech, and abstraction can draw thought into the unspoken dark-rooms of a subject. However shallow the Bechers’ own stated ideas about industrial forms, the images—precisely by their renunciation of narrative—seem to demand the question “What happened here?” The melancholy force of the Bechers’ work has become a critical truism, but the sense of loss you feel studying their photographs is a mourning not so much for each individual

demolished object as for prewar optimism itself, all the old beliefs in monumental structures, programs, political solutions.

■

**SKEPTICISM ABOUT MODERNIZING SYSTEMS** and progressive agendas remains locked in amber in Central Europe, a result of the long (50-year) Second World War. Hilla came of age in that atmosphere, lived through the transition to East Germany, and was already 20 when she fled to the West with her mother. In North America, this kind of political-intellectual austerity—the stoic notion that one had best concentrate on one’s private life and leave questions of civic well-being to the idiot experts, who will foul things up no matter what you do—is less in vogue now than ever, and readers and moviegoers and people who frequent galleries all expect a sense of social engagement to underpin even the most formally exquisite works. It is in this light that the Bechers’ radically neutral vision, so influential to a generation of photographers as well as painters and filmmakers, has acquired its own nostalgic patina. In 2004, Hilla told an interviewer: “I was interested in representing the object precisely, whereby anything, even a face, could be considered an object.... The nineteenth-century stance overflowing with ideas relating to photojournalism... was not my thing.” Their photographs have been exhibited in Ileana Sonnabend’s galleries since 1971 and have been understood at least since then through the lens of conceptual art, so it’s entirely conventional to segregate their body of work from “ideas relating to photojournalism.” The odd thing is how stubbornly those ideas reassert themselves.

■

**THE BECHERS’ EARLIEST PHOTOGRAPHS** were taken in the Ruhr region, which happened to be crucial to Hitler’s war machine (see, for example, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the Battle of the Ruhr, etc.). As the art historian Kathleen James-Chakraborty notes in *Beyond Berlin*, a book of essays about Nazi architecture, the Zeche Germania plant that the Bechers photographed in Dortmund in 1971 was built between 1939 and ’44. This fact is included in their own documentation of the image but nowhere that I know of in critical writings on their work. The photographer and writer Ian Wiblin, in the recent volume *Camera Constructs*, points out that the iron produced by the equipment we see in the Bechers’ *Blast Furnace, Hainer Hütte, Siegen, Germany, 1961* could have both supported the German military during World War I and been the product of slave labor during World



War II. Some of the Bechers' typologies show structures particular to a given country (such as *Winding Towers, Germany, 1972–1983*), in which case it may occur to a viewer to ask what all that coal (hauled up via the winding towers) wound up fueling, and when. But visual analogies governing the logic of a grid often nullify any historical distinctions among the photographs. See, for instance, the small-intestinal kinship of *Blast Furnaces, Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg, 1963–1995*. Its wide range of dates and places neutralizes the question of local conditions and histories; function matters only to the extent that it dictates form. The best we have from the Bechers on this point is something Hilla once said: She and Bernd "very quickly agreed on a fundamental conviction, namely that technology does not need to be interpreted, it interprets itself." Alas, history is different.

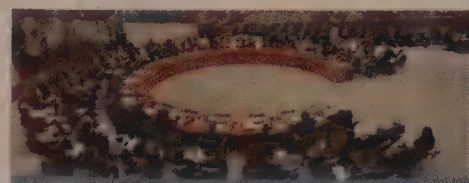
**THERE IS A TENSION, IN THE BECHERS'** photographs and in their statements, between the urge to document a vanishing industrial landscape and the desire to create a whole new vocabulary of images. It tends to be Bernd who returns to the idea of preservation; he first came to photography for practical reasons, after the industrial architecture near his hometown began to be demolished at a pace that his painting and drawing couldn't keep up with. He needed a faster technique to preserve his favorite industrial forms. Hilla once explained that "he was plagued by the fear that one day it might disappear and for that reason insisted on photographing it." A hint of disapproval crept into her tone: "When there was a danger of something disappearing, Bernd always responded intensely, maybe even a little hysterically." For Bernd, the style of supreme detachment appeared to serve his need for a kind of one-to-one realism, the kind of (magic) realism that quite literally reproduces its subject: "Because this type of world decays," he said, "what we wished for was not just to illustrate it but somehow to retain it." This is perilously close to sounding (Hilla might say) like a Romantic impulse.

**SHE WAS MORE INTERESTED IN THE AES-**thetic payoffs of the forms they captured, though this pleasure was expressed in an almost comical passion for systems. "The system is in our system," Hilla said, "it's in everybody's system. It is a central way in which our culture has organized information and knowledge since the Enlightenment." She sometimes hinted at her own dissent

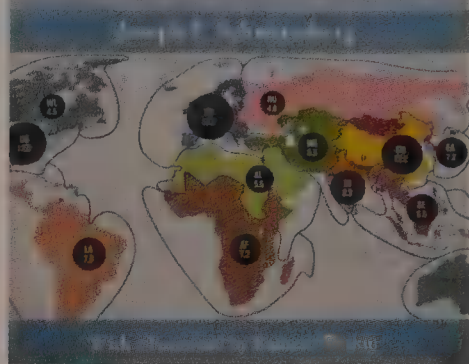
from the documentary nature of their project: "No, preservation wasn't the motivation, it was a side effect." After Bernd died, she went so far as to say: "Actually, he was never interested in photography"—meaning that for him it was merely the means to a purely archival end. Hilla was born in Potsdam, to a mother who'd trained as a photographer, and by the age of 13 she was taking her own pictures and later using a darkroom left to her by an uncle. She once said that "having fled Pomerania we had no possessions.... I simply photographed everything, at random. Aimlessly and incessantly." Hilla's instincts were acquisitive and formal, those of a collector: "We undertook this work for the sheer visual pleasure we knew it would bring us, pleasure from remarkable shapes...which existed primarily and originally for nonaesthetic, non-visual reasons. We wanted to discover such shapes and, with the help of photography, to collect them." Asked why they traveled to the United States to photograph a set of structures there, Hilla replied: "America and its plants were lacking in our collections."

**MANY PEOPLE COLLECT STAMPS, OR AN-**tiques, or cars. The Bechers chose a subject that was about as massive as the camera, at the time, could encompass, while insisting on a rhetorical approach (visually as well as in interviews) that was modest and mute to an almost perverse degree. This conflict—their refusal to monumentalize objects that are undeniably monumental—is the ethic that their students, among them Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky, and Candida Höfer, have inherited and further transformed. One thing that Struth and his peers have avoided, though, is the Bechers' disciplined adherence to a single method of composition. This may be further proof that the discipline itself is the Bechers' real subject; to borrow their single-mindedness for any new lifelong project would seem too much like copying the masters, the innovators of sameness. It also confirms the ways that photography, as a medium, resists total absorption into the realm of conceptual art: The Bechers took their unvarying vision about as far as it could go. Their heirs seem more interested in creating various sequences of photographs; they privilege the camera's many subjects rather than any one way of looking at them. Having retreated from the Bechers' abstracting approach, you could say Struth et al. try out manners of photography that are friendlier to those of us who write about the medium. Their pictures tend to invite summary rather than appearing to silence it.

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*The Nation*, October 20, 1956



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**BERND WAS SO FIXATED ON HIS AND HILLA'S** work that the family (in 1964 they had a son, Max) never took a real holiday, a fact that Hilla mentioned after he died. Yet she relished their nomadic existence, roaming from country to country and site to site: "I love the feeling not only of setting off somewhere new

but also of having no fixed abode." For all the asceticism of their lifestyle and strict silences about history, the Bechers did indulge in one form of extravagance: the fiction that arises from any collaborative project. The Bechers' story about themselves was consistently so basic that it tends to appear disarmingly transparent; yet it changed from decade to

decade, and after Bernd's death Hilla seemed to feel freer to talk about the past. Although Bernd was the documentary obsessive, he never bothered with family photos or portraits of any kind. After he died, Hilla revealed that this had been her job: "I always had a small camera on me. It was important for me, to keep memories." ■



A grid display of filter swatches.

## On "Looks"

BY RICKY D'AMBROSE

*"It's not judgment, but it's taste. You have to have a certain amount of taste to decide what to do."*

—Kevin Systrom, cofounder of Instagram

*"I can't really have a signature style or be bound to a medium. It's very hard because there's a style that emerges anyway, or maybe it's more a feeling than a style."*

—Parker Ito, artist

**A**t some point in the slow history of a sensibility, a dim, barely perceptible shift takes place between two adjacent ideas. Think, for example, of the transition from silent cinema, once prized as the purest and noblest expression of the medium, to talkies. And the shift, coming as it does when one traditionally very powerful type of experience is felt to be inadequate to the needs of the time, often feels like an ordeal. Suddenly, every leading idea, in order to remain valuable, demands

continuous, imperishable care.

In the arts, the results are typically mutually reinforcing, so that whatever no longer seems definitive or central to a particular form nonetheless retains some of its initial attraction and power. But in our time, it's not an expanded or a refurbished form but a neglected idea—a tiny, disesteemed thing, pulled from circulation—that accounts for one of the chief realignments of taste in the visual arts: the transition from art, long vaunted as a special, and autonomous, area of sensuous intelligence, to creativity, to which art can only ever be superficially related. And the catchphrase of those cheering on the

transition is a meager lexical scrap, drawn partly from commercial advertising and applied unreflectively to painting, photography, cinema, and the theater: the "look."

Looks are easily seen without being sought out. They are familiar to anyone who has taken and enhanced a picture with a mobile phone stocked with Instagram filters; or who has used a popular program named, appropriately enough, Magic Bullet Looks, with "over 200 brand-new Look presets, designed to match your favorite movies and TV shows"; or who has watched movies conspicuously shot on 16-millimeter film (*Young Bodies Heal Quickly*, *Listen Up Philip*, *L for Leisure*) or with

Ricky D'Ambrose is a filmmaker and critic in New York City.



analog video cameras (*No, Computer Chess*), or that imitate whatever visual trait is thought to be most incidental to an earlier technology, and therefore most evocative (film grain, shallow focus, the artifacts of interlaced video, “milky” or low-contrast images, “flat” or undersaturated colors).

Looks aren’t unique to images. There are live performances with looks (immersive theater, with its prodigal vision of classical Hollywood cinema), just as there are paintings (color fields, all-over abstraction, moiré patterns) and photographs (the hot white of the flash bulb, the contrast of Tri-X, the color of Kodachrome) that are said to have a “good look.” The audience, which sees something of its own viewing habits, and its own tastes, confirmed by the image, is in any case continuously flattered: One can watch a movie like *Ain’t Them Bodies Saints* and very easily single out what its director, David Lowery, calls the “dirty” palette of Robert Altman’s *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* and Michael Cimino’s *Heaven’s Gate*, and feel gratified. What underlies the shift to looks is the belief in neutral, impersonal images: Anything can become a picture, and any picture, overlaid with a look, can be customized, shored up temporarily with a borrowed feeling. And that feeling is confused with evidence of achievement. Thus, all looks take the form of a direct address; each image, no matter how depersonalized and routine, always seems “personalized,” made-to-order, and aimed at gratifying an existing idea of what a ’70s movie or a ’60s canvas or an ’80s photograph is like. Nothing about an image with a look is inexplicit or ambiguous.

As the look severs art from the old conventions—of amending insensible habits of looking and listening, of expressing or emptying out a consciousness—art and taste become unintentional, like the weather, extending indiscriminately into the furthest reaches of all human making and doing. Art, in the soft, easy way of creativity, becomes aptitude.

It may no longer be possible to come to the usual conclusions, to go on validating (or discrediting) works of art in the usual way. Viewed strictly as a creative achievement—as evidence of technical proficiency and skill—art resists the familiar terms. A look, however, converts all genuine accomplishments into cut-rate acquisitions; all images disclose, and end up authenticating, an endlessly repeatable technique. To wit, the American artist Petra Cortright: “That’s why I like defaults so much. Also I would never come up with those filters in a million years, so it’s nice to open yourself up to other options that you wouldn’t think of on your own. It’s like if you don’t already know something you can’t search for it.”

Every look implies a fantasy of mastery. The philistine’s old rebuke—“My child could do that”—has been replaced, in our time, by a different expression, unprecedented in the history of sensibility but no less noxious: “I can do that, too.”

**W**hat’s important to stress is that a look is not a style, if by style we mean the involuntary guiding plan of a work of art, or the transmission of an ineffable personal vision or sensibility into form. A look, which deals in part with anonymous visual choices, can never be a style, because an image with a “look” has been scoured of all traces of a sensibility. As Walter Pater rightly said, writing at the end of the 19th century, “The one word for the one thing, the one thought, amid the multitude of words, terms, that might just do: the problem of style was there!” (Pater, had he lived past the age of 54, would have found the “problem of style” intact: It gave the name to a work by Remy de Gourmont, published in 1902, and to a book by John Middleton Murry, published almost 20 years later.) But insofar as the aim of all style involves matching a feeling to a form, a sensibility to a style, art remains useless. And the uselessness of art will always be definitive.

At the simplest level, what possible consensus about the human body, about its physiology and movement and composure, can be seen in images like Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* and Gerhard Richter’s *Woman Descending the Staircase*? Similarly, who would demand that Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times* and Alain Resnais’s *Le chant du Styrene* should add up to a single, unanimous statement about factory work? Whether or not we respond to Chaplin or Duchamp as artists has less to do with the equivalence or accuracy of their depictions of particular subjects than with Chaplin’s grace and clarity as a performer, with Duchamp’s convulsive handling of multiple planes of vision. The coherence of their art, their “rightness,” depends in large measure on inherent, rather than supplemental or contiguous, standards of vision and sound.

As a source of truth telling, art is a lender of last resort. There are no aesthetic achievements that aren’t in some sense anomalous, opaque, or indistinguishable from whatever crowds the artist’s intricate field of vision. As Jean-Luc Godard once declared: “To me, style is just the outside of content, and content the inside of style, like the outside and the inside of the human body—both go together, they can’t be separated.” That is, style can tell us everything—not about the world, but about

the work, which insists upon its own standards of verisimilitude. (This is why it’s pointless to accuse filmmakers like Robert Bresson and Eugène Green of getting “unnatural” or “cold” performances out of their actors; it’s also why the smooth, very even intonations of the characters in a Richard Maxwell play cannot so easily be dismissed as “deadpan,” “wooden,” “mechanical.” One risks being uncomprehending, or crude, or both.) But the standards of a given work can be difficult to detect. When artists like Thomas Hirschhorn, Ragnar Kjartansson, and Tino Sehgal produce not objects but situations, in the form of colloquia, lectures, and musical performances that stretch out and repeat interminably, style seems incidental. Or consider Bruce Baillie’s film *Quick Billy*, which begins in full-color abstraction and ends in mock-western regalia, making any claims about its style answerable to unanticipated shifts in its texture and tone. As works of art, each is a complex, gratifying event with its own time, its own intensive principles of motion and speed. And each demands its own singular forms and uses of attention.

**S**tyle annuls the impersonal. This is what separates style from a look, because looks, hammered out by filters, presets, and templates—in short, by techniques—depend on unanimity: between a fast, evocative image that conjures up other, more established images (drip paintings and blotched monochromes; the color and light of contemporary Hollywood action movies; the “haziness” of certain films from the 1970s, often achieved by “flashing” or exposing film stock prior to processing) and a viewer on whom nothing is ever lost. Looks, to the extent they have any connection to the idea of tradition, treat the history of images as a history of changing qualities of resolution. Each technological feat—analogue to digital, standard definition to high definition—becomes an endorsement of newer classes of “sharper” images, each with its own reproducible artifacts and flaws.

With looks, there is no time for squinting, no time for whatever is, or might be, inexplicable. A look—insofar as it has any resemblance to style at all—is a kind of instant style: quickly executed and dispatched, immediately understood, overcharged with incident. To say that a film, a photograph, a painting, or a room’s interior has a look is to assume a consensus about which parts of a nascent image are the most worthy of being parceled out and reproduced on a massive scale. It means making a claim about how familiar an image is, and how valuable it seems. This is why *Beasts of the Southern Wild*—one of the most wasteful films in the



contemporary looks canon, with its shameless and moralizing bootstraps story connected by analogy to a set of “lyrical” and “naturalistic” handheld 16-millimeter images—could be commended by anyone. It’s why the “clean look” of so much recent commercial design—partial to narrow, sans-serif typefaces superimposed on photographs or against stark blocks of color—can be adopted by countless Web designers, independent presses, online journals, and ad agencies.

But the hoarded visual cues of the look—color schemes, film grain, solar flares, assorted lines of resolution—are intelligible only in a time like ours, in which enormous doses of images are being seen, and seen adjacently. The wireless and fiber-optic retrieval system that most of us carry in our pockets, and that can be used to compare innumerable movies, photographs, television series, paintings, and recorded theatrical events at an unprecedented speed, is a source of densely compacted information, one that makes it suddenly possible to “see” the minutiae of an image, whether intentional (“mood” lighting, contrast levels, color palettes) or not (blurred motion, pixelation, film scratches), even as the lines between what is and isn’t intentional in a work of art are continually being redrawn. What we have now isn’t a more sophisticated visual sensibility, enhanced by technology, but a newly sensitized, pernicious way of traffick-ing in images, from which a look takes its cue.

**L**ooks come out of a period that began more than two centuries ago, when art and leisure suddenly could become simultaneous experiences. Think of rococo in the 18th century, Eric Satie’s furniture music, Biedermeier drawing rooms, the picturesque, Japonisme—the accoutrements of a moneyed taste culture lavish with disposable time, smitten with accessory, and eager for simulated cultural adventure. A history of looks without an account of leisure’s relationship to images—of the way an industrial or service society grossly restricts the size and quality of leftover time; of the potential conversion of art into divertissement, designed to block out rather than intensify any sense of a work’s duration—risks slighting what may be the look’s closest precedent: the middle culture (or “Midcult”) described by Dwight Macdonald over 50 years ago, which “pretends to respect the standards of High Culture while in fact it waters them down and vulgarizes them.” Consider the suburban housewife, who could proudly display Mortimer J. Adler and Robert Hutchins’s “Great Books of the Western World” series—all 54 volumes of it, bound in leather—to the admiring eyes of

visitors; or the middle-class businessman just back from Europe, who hoped to raise the level of his dining-room walls with reproductions of Picasso and Matisse. Taste, in either scenario, was largely aspirational.

We may still be living out the consequences of Midcult thinking. Like the props of middlebrow taste, the look points uncomprehendingly to what is just outside the frame: not to a panoply of political or moral “issues” waiting to be dramatized, but to an abridged history of recognizable images—recognizable even upon casual viewing—from which the middle gets its marketable repertoire.

But the repertoire has changed. Macdonald’s account of an increasingly clogged intermediary level in our culture, armed with cheap editions of modernist works of art, doesn’t apply as easily to corporate stock photographs, Google Street View images, *DIS Magazine*, Baz Luhrmann movies, and the George Miller of *Mad Max* as it can to the Terrence Malick of *Days of Heaven*, anything by John Cassavetes, minimal art, William Eggleston photographs, and postwar Swiss graphic design. A look takes in a much wider range of images than the Midcult did.

Looks do begin with techniques that are mainly impersonal and end by appealing to a viewer’s private storeroom of visual associations. They do this by taking the artist out of the equation altogether. The result is a catalog of isolated visual qualities, anonymous and interchangeable, that can be applied to any image, any object, and at any time. Macdonald was speaking to a version of this in his own day when he lamented that the Bauhaus now shows up in “the design of our vacuum cleaners, pop-up toasters, supermarkets and cafeterias.” What we have now is a litany of familiar descriptions of presets and filters: “organic,” “epic,” “iconic,” “realistic,” “scrappy,” “minimalist,” “handmade,” “warm,” “raw,” “polished,” and so on. In the words of one fashionable cinematographer:

The look had to be very real.... It has flaws. Things are underexposed, but it feels more organic. In contemporary blockbuster movies where every single black and white level is perfect in every single shot, it can kill the realism to me.

**L**ooks don’t aim to fool the eye. We are not supposed to be tricked into believing that a picture is anything other than it really is: It is not really a Holga snapshot, not really a Betacam recording, but instead a certain combination of gamma and contrast levels, a certain adept handling of sharpness and luminance and saturation,

accelerated by software, which a look never pretends to conceal.

Unlike the middlebrow object, done up with the sheen of high culture and produced to endorse respectable taste, an image with a look is its technique, and its ideal viewer (in our time, the qualifications are becoming much easier to come by and much simpler to obtain) takes great pleasure in pinpointing the underlying mechanics. Images with looks are never opaque: One can always see the tools, more reproducible than ever before. Equipped with a glut of competing digital paraphernalia—Fotor, Hipstamatic, Vintager, CameraBag, Tiffen Photo FX, Snapseed, Enlight, Afterlight, Priime, Camera Noir—the consumer and the artist become continuous. One sees the oppressive green-yellow-blue in Michael Mann’s film *Blackhat* or the exposure value of a Garry Winogrand street photograph and knows how to—in fact, is able to—make something that looks like that. “You don’t need to understand photography jargon or, say, the technical difference between adjusting a photo’s color saturation and its color temperature,” intones *The New York Times* in an article about Instagram. “All you’ve got to do is turn up this slider, turn down that one, then tap and hold to see how your changes are working.”

In other words, a look needs no notion of composition, of the arrangement of persons and things inside an image. The frame no longer exists. Instead, a look is a disassembling: The most perceptible parts of a given image are loosened and converted into a technique that can be repeated. Knowing what to do with this technique becomes, like shopping, a matter of preference, free from all limits and need.

**N**ot a week goes by in this country without a young filmmaker denouncing the turn to digital images, the collective giving-up of celluloid. (And not a film festival goes by, in this or any other country, without some special emphasis added to those few titles shot on “sumptuous 16mm.”) By now, there is a familiar and solemn stance: against the ugliness of digital images, against the “harshness” of the digital cinema package.

But what the filmmakers defending analog video and celluloid have meant to say, over the last few years especially, isn’t that their own images are more beautiful or more alluring than their digital counterparts. What they mean is that their images are more *interesting*, in the way one could, for a time, speak of the ruins of antiquity or of the “licked finish” of academic painting as interesting. Something becomes interesting when it can be separated



out from an immense crowd of similar objects. It's the dismal achievement of a squandering and imperial and very modern way of drawing up the world, as though it's necessary to take an account, in one enormous sweep, of all there is. It's what happens when art becomes a token of "visual culture," or is absorbed into the undifferentiating and deathless vertical scroll of digital images. When the eye must, in one critic's words, "rapidly target relevant data in a noisy stream," or when the worth of a picture is a function of how attractively it registers on a screen, being interesting is the preferred (and perhaps only) criterion of declarable value. And one way of making an image interesting—the quickest, most seductive way—is by furnishing it with a look.

The task is hardly limited to moving and photographic images. Painters continue to use paint, but in a way that accommodates the bright light of the smartphone's liquid-crystal display. What's been called "zombie formalism"—attributed to a number of contemporary painters, like Lucien Smith, Parker Ito, Jacob Kassay, Oscar Murillo, Joe Bradley, Helene Appel, who rely on a recurring stock of archetypes, drawn from action painting, Arte Povera, post-minimalism, and process art—is really just a way of cashing in on the characteristic light quality of our time. (Every period has its reigning policy of luminescence. Ours happens to be brighter, more officious than the rest.) This is what *Artforum* meant a few years ago when it remarked that the "warm, low-contrast gray-brown tones of these paintings are an ideal foil for the cold colors and high contrast of both the iPhone IPS screen and its simulation via the fluorescent lights of the gallery."

Zombie formalism doesn't cancel out or subtract from a painting's physical presence (as, say, a canvas suspended on a wall), but shows it in a context—that of the gallery, digitally photographed under continuous white light—that makes the work seem credible, compelling. The statement made by Parker Ito—"I think of the production of an artwork intended for physical exhibition or web-based exhibition simultaneously"—is thus of a piece with a feature of much of the new painting (schooled in the accumulation of virtual detritus, the iconography of YouTube videos, GIFs, Tumblr feeds, and MySpace profiles) that has been given the specious name "Post-Internet art."

"You see and get it fast, and then it doesn't change," one critic writes. "There are no complex structural presences to assimilate, few surprises, and no unique visual iconographies or incongruities to come to terms with. It's frictionless, made for trade." A thing with a look.

**L**ooks are founded on a myth—the myth of total creativity. And, like all myths, this one comes with its own stock figure: the young "creative," thoroughly urbanized, mainly white, typically heterosexual and male, a self-exalted arbiter of 21st-century creative capitals, haunted by the trimmings of the suburban adolescence he left behind. If the provincial middlebrow home could vulgarize the accomplishments of a historically urban avant-garde, the freshly gutted and refurbished cityscape of our period, no longer blighted (when seen from the proper angle) or burning (when seen under the right aspect), can turn any coffeehouse or restaurant, any boutique or hotel, into a replicable visual scenario, done up with chrome fixtures, exposed light bulbs, tin ceilings, pale hardwood paneling, smoked mirrors, walls as white as a gallery's—in short, with an imported, repossessing vision of what urban life is like.

Nothing is exempt from the creative's glare. In the filmmaker Albert Serra's words, "It's about being sensitive to the atmosphere, because you can catch everything. So this change, from the world in the mind of the filmmaker to the 360 degrees of the world around him, makes everything possible." Everything is possible, in the hands of the creative. Everything can become material, or "atmosphere," spruced up by ingenuity. This may be why it seems increasingly difficult for so many people to go on speaking about particular places. The creative, with his pocketful of looks, sees only a "space" ("What a good space!"), ready to be used up, in the way artists now commonly refer to what they do as a "practice" ("in my practice" or "my practice examines...").

The idea of creativity, which is always parasitical, gives to a look its huge, plundering reach. There are creative writers, creative designers, creative engineers, and, in that sickly phrase, creative entrepreneurs—but this is of an altogether different order from being an artist, which can require certain creative uses or deployments of a sensibility, but which typically demands large rations of vision and talent and intelligence that are, from the vantage point of an audience of consumers, ultimately unresolvable. Creativity, like a look, means rubrics and recipes, which imply varying levels of proficiency. What is thought to be the chief level, virtuosity, is, for the creative, not a matter of mastering a convention—in the way a work of art can be said to be an intensification or thwarting of a convention, born of the artist's appetite for all that has been said and done—but of mastering the manufacturer's rules. (All one has to do is compare the im-

ages used to market Hipstamatic to anything that appears in a Sundance lineup, or on a Vimeo feed, for an example of what I mean.) The creative stands defiantly outside the history of art, or else ransacks a thin chronology of images (Andy Warhol's through Christopher Wool's, Martin Scorsese's through Quentin Tarantino's), ready to recover from everything before him the most potentially exciting look—his salvageable loot—that Canon or Apple can engineer.

This delirious pillaging threatens to transform, for all time, every object it finds. We may be reaching a point at which it's no longer possible to see a work of art, or any image at all, without disaggregating it into its technical miscellany. Worse perhaps, the miscellany may be the only thing that remains. One can now watch John Cassavetes's *A Woman Under the Influence* just as one watches Joe Swanberg's recent *Happy Christmas*: in quotation marks. (Both have "the 16-millimeter look.") The look and its source become, in the mind of the viewer who knows the corresponding filter, identical.

**A** history of the visual arts of the past half-century is a history of at least three controlling ideas.

In the first—call it the Clement Greenberg idea—art is always a given art, a statement of first things: A painting is a painting, never more or less, because the "ineluctable flatness" of the picture plane—an optical event, unique to painting—leads not to an illusion, staged in depth, but to the utter fact of paint and its support. The exemplary work will, in Greenberg's words, "confine itself exclusively to what is given in visual experience, and make no reference to anything given in any other order or experience." Art extends into space, not the other way around. It does this by recognizing limits (say, the formal limits of the canvas), which the artist can only refine. (Impressionism leads to Cubism leads to Abstract Expressionism leads to the post-painterly abstraction of Ellsworth Kelly, Morris Louis, Frank Stella, and others.)

In the second—call it the post-Greenberg idea—art is not, strictly speaking, seen: It can be read, stepped into, touched, completed by the viewer, thrown away, disassembled, given over to chance operations and to conceptual problems, or else (and maybe above all) diminished by "critique." The idea of a medium with its own regulating terms of conduct, with its own limits (whether set by canvas, stage, celluloid, or video technology), becomes much less tenable. Art, in this view, finds itself almost entirely spent. "All there is at the end is theory," Arthur Danto wrote in



the 1980s, “art having finally become vaporized in a dazzle of pure thought about itself, and remaining, as it were, solely as the object of its own theoretical consciousness.”

And then there's the third idea: our own. We may only now be coming to terms with what happens to a work of art—indeed, to the notion of art altogether—when a fantastic number of images can be circulated, reproduced, amended, swapped, and joined together effortlessly as data sent out for processing. The critic David Joselit recently remarked that art is now akin to an immense content-management system, devoted not to the creation of new objects, but to devising “new formats” that the artist uses to manipulate (or document, or record) existing “populations of images.” In our time, the work of artists like Petra Cortright, Guthrie Lonergan, and Seth Price consists of digital paintings, webcam videos, Google search results, PDF files, printed books, computerized 3-D graphics, Getty stock images, and fashion lines. As our ability to look at works of art becomes less and less fixed by the gallery visit, and therefore less intentional than ever before, the value of the viewer—no longer in a position to distinguish between different classes of things—becomes grossly overestimated: Too many images chasing too few eyes. In this setting, as Boris Groys has pointed out,

The traditional relationship between producers and spectators as established by the mass culture of the twentieth century has been inverted. Whereas before, a chosen few produced images and texts for millions of readers and spectators, millions of producers now produce texts and im-

ages for a spectator who has little to no time to read or see them.

Of course, an artist could defend ■ vocation threatened by the encroaching aesthetic adventurism of our period. But the task seems unbearable. Thus, artists are now inclined to describe what they do with a sense of general antipathy, even embarrassment. Alas, Tania Bruguera: “I want people not to look at it but to be in it, sometimes without knowing it is art.” Alas, too, Josh Smith: “It’s all about the perspective. The viewer can make things as precise or as open as they want.” And alas, the new descriptions, meant to console: no more artists, but rather “archivists,” “explorers,” “documentarians.” No more art, but “content.” No more styles, only looks.

“It is my belief that we are approaching the point where there will be no visual arts at all of a serious kind. On the one hand, the ‘advanced’ gestures, the project-foolery, will become stabilized; on the other hand, something like the Royal Academy will survive.”

That is the British painter and critic Wyndham Lewis writing in 1955, near his end. Lewis was right. Something like the Royal Academy has survived—in the form of a new establishment of computer programmers, graphic artists, DSLR video-makers, cinematographers, film-festival programmers, and Web designers, all of whom promise to reward our vision in the way that an image with a look intends to: by assimilating it to a lifestyle.

A lifestyle is what makes a look possible at all, because every look is a kind of amenity—the amenity of an image—that goes hand in

hand with a taste for extreme sports, summers at Coachella, and 1,200 square feet with a view in Williamsburg. And a lifestyle, like a look, is available only in an affluent, wasteful, appetitive society such as ours, committed to reckless uses of limited energy, built upon extravagance and speed, crammed with unremitting secondhand desires that are hugely disproportionate to what most of us are capable of ever achieving.

The setting that's given us our excess of looks needs to be better understood. It's the situation that allows any person to want, in the words of one GoPro copywriter, “more of yourself and your surrounding in the shot,” more “captivating” and “ultra-engaging footage of every adventure.” How much longer can such monstrous adventurism last? The perpetuation of looks may well continue, but only as long as it's possible to go on despoiling and wrecking and depleting whatever is most necessary, and most perishable, to us.

From a recent interview with the American filmmaker Antonio Campos:

One of the things that attracted us to the neighborhoods we shot in, in Pigalle, it looks like how Times Square looked in *Taxi Driver*. That really excited us. It set the tone that we felt like we were shooting a New York movie in Paris. We had the approach like it was a New York '70s movie and that's what we embraced. We made the decision for people not to look into the camera, but we wanted that life. So we did a lot of shots across the street looking into the cafe, we kind of let life play out.

It is time for a new view. What will it be? ■

# The Big Friendly Director

by STUART KLAWANS

Most young girls probably would prefer not to be snatched from bed by a hand the size of a London taxicab, toted half-blind across moors and mountain ranges, whisked through crackling thunderclouds, and at last hung like a drying cheese high up in the cave of a shambling, muttering, misshapen figure who wields a cleaver three times their length. In this sense, the heroine of *The BFG*, 10-year-old Sophie, is much like other girls, though different too. She trembles at her freakish captor's appetite; she despairs

of escaping from his gargantuan lair. But above all, she's royally ticked off by her loss of self-reliance.

Despite the impression you might get from her big reading glasses and rosebud mouth, with a notch between the front teeth like an inverted V for “vulnerable,” Sophie (the faultlessly self-confident Ruby Barnhill) manages for herself where she usually lives, in a Thames-side orphanage left over from the Victorian era. As screenwriter Melissa Mathison and director Steven Spielberg establish at the start of *The BFG*, with a brisk efficiency

to equal their protagonist's, she's the kind of bright, bossy, slightly sneaky child who wanders at will in the night, keeps an eye out for the early mail delivery (in case one of her fellow orphans receives something interesting), and can credibly threaten arrest when customers at the pub down the road make too much noise at closing time. Sophie might be underestimated in the grown-up world, but she can maneuver in it, if mostly on the sly.

Now, kidnapped by someone much larger than any human adult but also (when you get to know him) oddly bashful and ingenuous, she doesn't at first know quite what to do: cower, remonstrate, instruct, or just play along with an increasingly enchanted game.

There's an abundance of enchantment, in fact, which enables Spielberg's adaptation of





Ruby Barnhill (left) and Mark Rylance in *The BFG*.

the Roald Dahl novel to charm and excite, meanwhile offering children useful lessons about being kind and imaginative, standing up to bullies, and shunning cannibalism. For both children and their grown-ups, the movie may also deepen in emotion thanks to the complexity of Sophie's responses to the Big Friendly Giant and his world, with its seamless blend of filmed objects and computer-animated marvels. And for some grown-ups, there will be even more to think about, since *The BFG* could also be titled *The Testament of Steven Spielberg*.

You don't need to hold the endowed chair in semio-babble at Jacques Lacan University to recognize that Spielberg, cofounder of DreamWorks, might have found a mirror for himself in Dahl's Big Friendly Giant, who teaches Sophie how to chase dreams and bottle them. Some filmmakers, like Jean Renoir, represent themselves on screen as people of homey appearance and manner, wise enough in the ways of the world to get along cheerfully but sufficiently disappointed to wonder why they bother. Spielberg, who for better and worse has never shown much interest in human-scaled cinema, makes his self-portrait three stories tall, with the voice and computer-enhanced face of Mark Rylance, and gives this stand-in a magical occupation to match. The perpetrator of *Jaws* presumably has something in common with a character who knows how to concoct nightmares. The Hollywood titan, with sure instincts about public sentiment may fantasize that his ears, like those of the BFG, are immense fans that he flaps at will, attuning him to "all the secret whisperings of the world."

If you accept the notion that Spielberg may be picturing himself, then he's no doubt boasting a little—or inflating himself a lot—

despite having instructed the animators to render the BFG with receding white hair and wrinkled eyes, a sunken chest and chicken-wing elbows. These traits may add a wry admission of age to the image Spielberg has chosen to project—but some viewers still might wonder why he thinks he's important enough to stamp himself on Dahl's character.

All I can say is, artists have been creating self-portraits for a very long time, often with a mythologizing flair, so get used to it. Two decades ago, critics who disliked the pandering in Spielberg's movies could still dismiss him as a mere engineer of lucrative entertainments, who by attempting to rise to respectability with *Schindler's List* had dragged the Holocaust down to the level of commerce. But after *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, *Minority Report*, *Munich*, *Lincoln*, and *Bridge of Spies*—to name only some of the most reputable titles—it's no longer possible to brush him off. He's both a force in popular culture and an artist, and may reasonably assume that people might care to watch a version of the legendary "Steven Spielberg" (as distinguished from the 69-year-old man of the same name, who presumably creaks a little now on his way to brush his teeth).

The main question about the ethics of self-representation in *The BFG* isn't whether Spielberg is flattering himself. It's how much respect he gives Sophie, and us—because she stands in symbolic relation to the BFG as we do to the director.

The first thing to notice is that Sophie is complicit in her abduction, whispering the rules she's violating as she slips from bed and advances into a snatchable position. It's the same with us: By taking our seats, we provisionally agree to let Spielberg reach out and capture us. After the initial adrenaline rush,

though, Sophie starts to think again instead of merely reacting, and to the degree that Spielberg encourages us to model ourselves on the child, he thinks we should do the same. She rebukes the BFG when necessary and feels free to explore his cave, which is furnished with scavenged goods like street lamps and sailing ships. (They could be props and sets that Spielberg salvaged from a backlot warehouse.) As the plot advances, Sophie moves on to giving the BFG advice, making plans for him, and manipulating him through flattery. She's no longer just a passenger on their adventure; now she's his codirector.

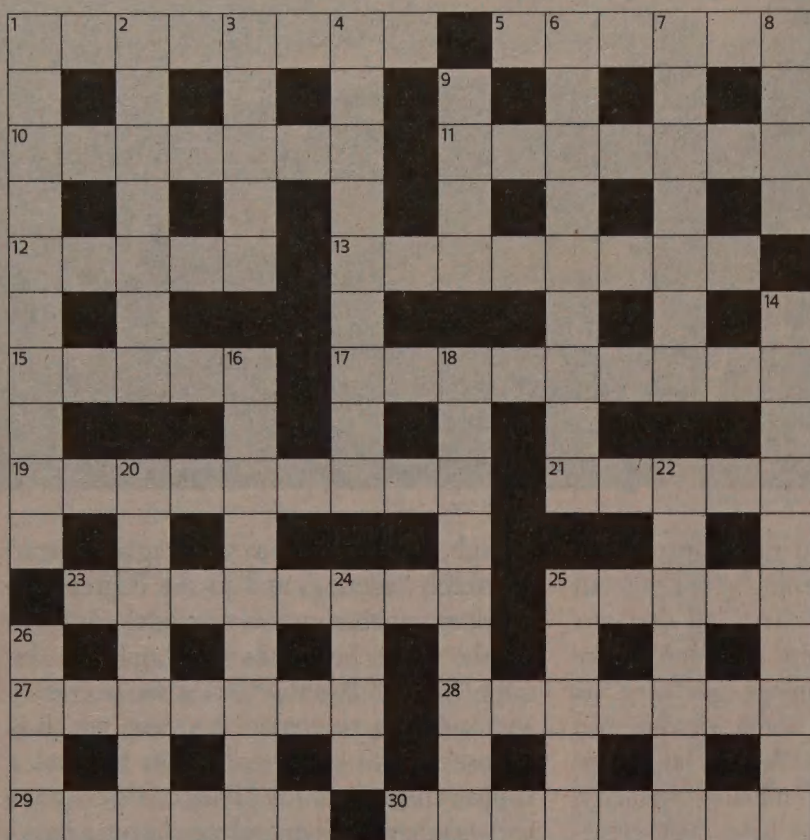
In this way, Spielberg asks Sophie—and us—to remember him as our guide, partner, pupil, and watchful admirer. It's an honorable testament, proposed in humility, but with no false modesty about his talent for magic or his looming stature. (Though he points out that he doesn't loom like the major studios, allegorized here as the *really* big giants, bloodthirsty and stupid, who surround and harass the BFG.)

As for the rest: *The BFG* does not win the contest for best screen adaptation of a Roald Dahl novel, a competition suspended after *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Nor is this Spielberg's best film, even among his family entertainments. (For one thing, it's a bit complacent about Sophie's taste for social climbing and military solutions.) Those objections aside, *The BFG* is beautiful and droll and has a few happy tears to go with the excellent fart jokes. I can tell you that when the towering BFG at last withdraws from Sophie, I reflected that Spielberg, too, will depart someday, and I thought: Go in peace. I forgive you for the *Jurassic Park* series and *War Horse*, too much *Indiana Jones* and *The Adventures of Tintin*. Thank you for the good ones—including *The BFG*. ■



# Puzzle No. 3402

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



## ACROSS

- 1 Legume enthusiast catches Gardner with bare shoulders (4,4)
- 5 Love to sail to Washington with Native American (6)
- 10 Restore unfinished puzzle with broken lid (7)
- 11 Dress to shock, concealing note (7)
- 12 Hot rod crashing outside a stockpile (5)
- 13 One who might perform sacred music, or They Might Be Giants (8)
- 15 Not in motion during 49er timeout (5)
- 17 Eva Peron's inauguration: give a speech and vanish into thin air (9)
- 19 Lawmaker playing, uh, marimba? (9)
- 21 Darkness near the middle of daytime (5)
- 23 I see a limitation and turn sharply, coming back to get soup (8)
- 25 Earth without gravity is spherical (5)
- 27 After hours, dissolute priest becomes someone who is with it (7)
- 28 Hack allowed introduction to virtual media option (5,2)
- 29 Prose? Not even an attempt! (6)

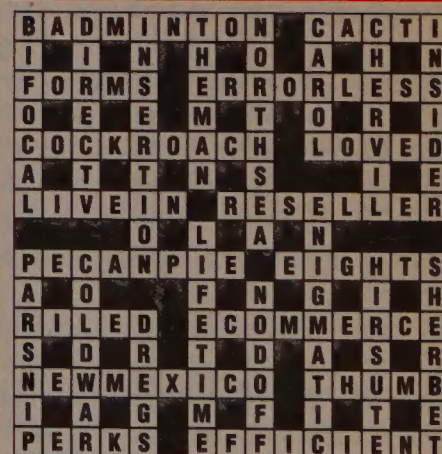
- 30 Wanderer's headless corpse and literary doctor getting back in front (8)

## DOWN

- 1 Straightforward announcement of what follows baptism, confirmation, and marriage? (10)
- 2 Shake obnoxious child in the midst of contest (7)
- 3 Tie a string across top of lamp shade (5)
- 4 Saharan dromedary carries an ancient princess (9)
- 6 In Munich, certainly, show eagerness to control an area where some Asians live (9)
- 7 Sit uncomfortably amid, say, Egyptian uprising with representative of the counterculture? (7)
- 8 Rod, with a spin, put something unknown in beer (4)
- 9 Suspend boundless variation (4)
- 14 Actress, coming in late, helped perpetrate a crime at car rental agency (5,5)
- 16 Musician beginning to take a drink with a saint (9)
- 18 In Dominica, a bizarre organic compound (5,4)
- 20 Entrée: encounter a Greek character on the telephone (4,3)
- 22 Man, before eating a piece of Roquefort cheese... (7)
- 24 ...removed part of an apple using radio wire (4)
- 25 Investigates topless attire (5)
- 26 Man with crack (4)

## SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3401

ACROSS 1 BAD + MINT + ON  
 6 C(ACT)I 9 FOR M, S 10 letter bank  
 11 C(OCKR)OACH (rock anag.) 12 L + OVED (rev.) 13 LI + VEIN 14 RES[t] + [t]ELLER 17 hidden 19 [w]EIGHTS  
 23 R + I + LED 25 ECO + M + MERCE  
 26 NEWM(E + XI)CO (cowmen anag.)  
 27 T(HUM)B 28 2 defs. 29 EFF + ICIENT (anag.)  
 DOWN 1 BIF + O(C)AL (rev.) 2 anag.  
 3 [m]IN(SERT)ION (très rev.) 4 anag.  
 5 NORTH(S)EA (earth no anag., & lit.)  
 6 CAR + OL (rev.) 7 CHER + VIL[e]  
 8 "inn cider" 15 anag. 16 LIFE (anag.)  
 + TIME (rev.) 17 PAR + SNIP  
 18 COL + DWAR[f] 20 H(IRS + UT)  
 E 21 hidden 22 NODO[z] + FF  
 24 DR(EG)S





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